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COMICS CREATORS GUILD AWARD WINNER

COMIC World

DECEMBER 1993

ISSUE NO 22

FRANK MILLER
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THE DEMOLITION MEN!

DREDD & BATMAN
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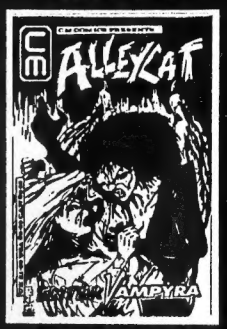

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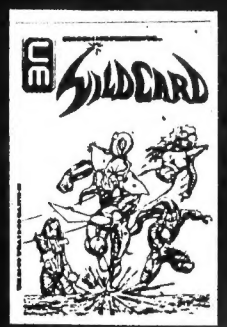

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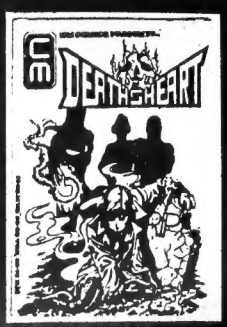

DEATHSHEART No. 2
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To find out more about C.M. COMICS or to order the new titles direct, contact CHRIS MORGAN at: 29 Larch Road, Maybush, Southampton, Hants. SO1 6ES, or telephone (0703) 781934).

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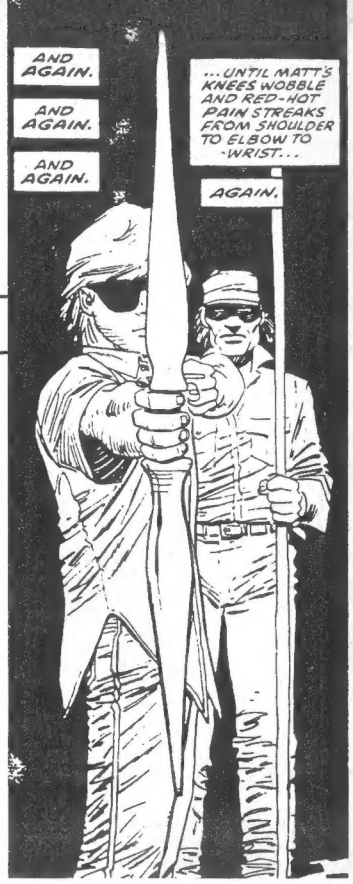

I'd like to share something with you, if I may. Way back in May 1992 (#3) Lance Rickman wrote a piece on storage; he returned to the same subject recently in an opinion piece for a magazine called Illuminations *which is distributed to the mail order customers of our local comic shop in Colchester where he works. Lance is a regular contributor to* Comic World *- his feature on 'Vendetta in Gotham' appears in this very issue - so you'll know his name; I just thought you might like to hear what he has to say...*

"A few people actually wrote to say that they agreed with the general philosophy of the article, and that they were getting fed up with adverts and articles by 'experts' telling *them how they* must *store their comics. But the hype continues, and I've had some phone calls asking exactly how acid-free our backing boards are, including one who became quite shirty because I couldn't quote the exact pH balance and calcium carbonate content of our backers.*

"What strikes me...is that, although the adverts invariably show a recent 'hot' comic snuggled in a mylar bag against a board (they know where their market lies), no attention is ever given to the make-up of the actual comic. After all, we're not trying to preserve some virginal, untouched material in its natural state here. A comic is printed on paper that is full of acids, toxins and impurities (many of which are what holds the wood fibres together as paper), heavily bleached into a semblance of whiteness, in the case of glossy interiors and cover-stock heat-pressed with a dilute china-clay solution for smoothness and saturated with synthetic inks entirely composed on noxious, reactive chemicals. Basically, I'm not convinced that a backing board displaying a pH of only 8.71 after a century is going to ensure the survival of this unstable, self-digesting, polluted mass of wood-pulp."

Unstable, self-digesting, polluted... *and we actively seek them out and invite them into our homes and weep when our mothers consign these dangerous, toxic monstrosities to the bin? How long before there's an EEC Council Directive issued or the Surgeon General gets involved?*

Joking aside, a far bigger threat is coming from our government who seem intent on putting V.A.T. on books and magazines. The simple fact is that it would damage our literate society greatly, and if you see any leaflets on the subject, follow their advice and write to your local M.P. Use the power that every elector has and say "I will not vote for you if you allow this tax to be imposed." No book will have any added value because of Value Added Tax.

A quick run through our Alien³ competition. We received tons of correct answers, but the lucky winners are Amy Hardiman (a raving Sigourney Weaver fan, she says), Andrew Hall, Ray Ashford, Alan Nicholls and James Bidwell. Congratulations all.

Next month we have Dave Sim, part two of the Frank Miller, John Ridgway, a look at Lois and Clark, a celebration of Frank Hampson, the usual columns and as much else as we can fit. Further ahead we have some great ideas for our birthday issue and the celebratory issue 25! We'll have more details next month. In the meantime, as we're coming to the end of the year, what are your thoughts on 1993? Write in and let us know.

Steve

Contributors: Steve Cook, Tony Earnshaw, Phil Hall, Richard Hill, Stephen L. Holland (no relation), Dave McLoughlin, Ray Moore, John Mosby, James Olney, Lance Rickman, Alan Woolicombe.

Cover: A chiaroscuric cover by Frank Miller. With Marv on the hot squat Frank's turning his attention to the dames you could kill for in Sin City, but this one was too good not to use! Sin City, its suburbs and environs, its inhabitants and visitors are all © Frank Miller and are used here because we begged him and he said yes. Don't try anything without asking permission because the spirit of Marv still lives. . . .

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COMIC World NEWS

CONTRACTION, SCALEDOWN, CONSOLIDATION OR COLLAPSE?

It all amounts to a streamlining of the industry

The long-awaited contraction within the industry after the 'Summer of Doom (alleged)' seems to have begun, although initial indications are that the predicted 'Colour Crash' will not be anything on the scale of the Black and White Collapse during the winter of 1986-87 (or, for that matter, the sinking of the Titanic in 1912). However, with some of the publishers involved in the current round of contraction rumours being amongst the biggest names in the industry - although we are extremely unlikely to see them collapsing down into their own foundations - the main cause for concern could be that those foundations are looking very unsteady in some cases: the usually cancellation-proof core titles of some companies are also about to be shaken up in moves that will clearly affect the whole industry in 1994.

This has been coupled with a panic in the speculator market, particularly in the U.S.A., where an exodus is taking place, and hoards of 'scare' comics are being dumped on the market.

INVESTMENT

Starting with the latter first, the already nervous speculation market began to panic when some of the biggest speculators gambled on *Adventures of Superman #500* repeating the phenomenal success of *Superman #75*, only to find that retailers and collector's were better prepared for the return of Superman than they had been for his death. The rebirth, less newsworthy outside the industry than the death of one of the nation's icons, generated less public interest, copies being steadily available, causing a glitch in the speculator investment and cash flow; some of the bigger buyers reacted by unloading many of their titles, fearing a repeat of the American card-collecting market collapse, and triggering a selling spiral.

As more copies arrived in the retail market and the buying-in price began to fall, the panic spread, causing other speculators to unload their stocks; late-comer speculators are no longer buying up stocks at the rate they were, and genuine readers and collectors can now find some supposedly scarce comics in wholesale quantities.

The shrinking investment market has already had one good effect on the American market where retailers have been able to gauge their buying over the past few months far better than they had during the summer where a single speculator could cause an outrageously inflated swing in sales for a title, artificially creating scarcity and panic amongst collectors, pushing prices through the roof. If you look hard enough you will 'see' a rare title, even if it is only genuinely scarce in one geographical region: the domino effect of tipping certain titles via national speculation magazines, who stare long and hard desperately seeking the next 'hot' title, has in the past lead to frenzied buying, artificially raising prices and creating a collectable that isn't.

This desperation amongst speculators also leads to price-hikes on the basis of rumours. For instance, the rumoured first appearance of Doomsday in *Superman #66* was capitalised upon by DC with a reprinting of the pre-Doomsday 'Panic in the Sky' storyline although writer Dan Jurgens later stated categorically that the supposed appearance was "the lamest rumour in the history of comics. I don't know how that got started. It never made any sense because in *Superman #68* - two issues later - the story was totally revealed...everyone speculated about it because they never read anything two months later that explained it all" *(Wizard #27)*. The price in the pages of *Wizard*, however, rose from $1.50 (in *#22*) via $7 (*#23*) to $10 (*#24*) where it has remained ever since.

Retailers and speculators were also stung by *Turok #1* which shipped without the promised cover enhancement, leaving shops with boxes of unsold copies.

With the investment market settling in America, we can expect reverberations to reach the U.K., although as the British market has never been so speculation-driven, the smaller ripples it will cause in the market will smooth over that much quicker.

However, we may not be able to say the same thing for the industry as a whole.

DISTRIBUTION

Two major changes are happening with the distribution network and the retail market: following two years of speculation-frenzy, retailers are now paying more attention to the stock they order, preferring to under-order and sell-through quickly than to be left with boxes of dead stock. The sting of Image's constant late delivery tying up millions of dollars has led to a retailer backlash, which has been responded to by Diamond Comic Distributors (now owners of Britain's Titan Distributors): from January, Diamond will shorten their cancellation period on orders for titles which do not ship from 90 day to 60 days, and hope to be shortening this period even further to 45 days, or even 30 days, by June 1994. Diamond's Bill Schanes has said that this was in a response to retailers requests "to tighten up the existing cancellation window.

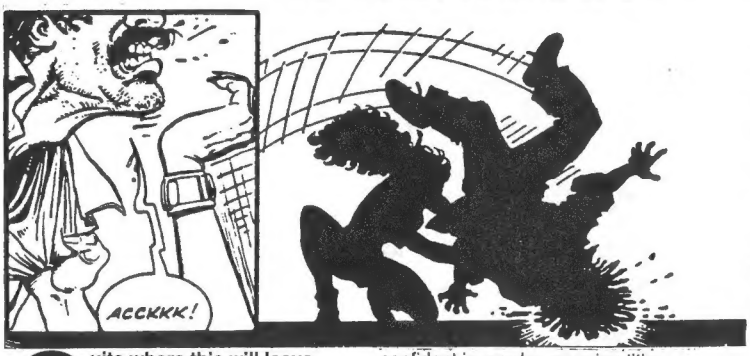
The current ordering system means that most retailers complete their orders through Diamond, Capital City, and other distributors, for titles due to ship in January 1994 on November 15. The 60 day rule will effectively force publishers to either ship within five months of those orders being made, or face the risk of having to resolicit against a background of having let readers and retailers down once already.

Image in particular have been allowed leeway with the cancellation system, amongst the most notorious titles being Whilce Portacio's *Wetworks* which was solicited in July/ August 1992, gaining the highest unit orders for that month, and has still yet to appear. Issues two and three reached #11 and #5 respectively in the top-sellers charts. At present, almost every Image core title would find itself cancelled if the 60 day rule

was applied, *Shadowhawk II* and the ongoing *The Savage Dragon* having been notable exceptions.

The move will also end another potential loophole which has almost certainly been exploited by some publishers, that of soliciting material and only bothering to print those titles which attract the highest orders, perhaps even waiting for order figures to arrive before work begins on actually drawing the issue. A further advantage will be that items targeted for sale at, say, Christmas, won't be arriving long after the Christmas season has ended.

IS THERE A SPIN-DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?



Quite where this will leave some publishers can only be guessed. The first titles to suffer in any change in the industry are low-circulation titles, usually those of independent publishers, but the summer months appear to have stretched pockets to their absolute limits, enough for the largest publishers to sit up and take notice.

It has been announced that Epic's Heavy Hitters line will be cancelled, Marvel UK will cut-back dramatically on their monthly schedule, cancelling the Frontier line in the process, and Vertigo will be reducing the number of new titles they publish each month.

The chinese whispers have also run to the cancellation of Epic as a line, the cancellation of certain Vertigo titles, and the collapse of Marvel UK, all stringently denied by the companies involved.

Whilst it is certain that more announcements will be made over the next few months, what has already become apparent is a steady erosion of sales in certain areas. As well as the increase in the number of mini-series being published - the first sign that companies were becoming less confident in regular, ongoing titles - the 'Family Planning' strategy, particularly that of Marvel, has begun to show signs of working against the publisher.

'Family Planning'? A simple case of grouping titles to maximise their potential, the theory running that if you like, say, *Batman* then there's a good chance you will like *Detective Comics featuring Batman*, and *Legends of the Dark Knight*. The Batman family, Superman family and X-Men family groups of titles are probably the best known in the industry - an industry which has always been imprint crazy. Back in the 1970s it wasn't impossible to buy every title published by any one publisher, but in the 1990s, with the major publishers now producing far more titles per month, they (and their fans) break their publications down into smaller family units, tempting fans of one title within a unit to try another title from the same family. This worked particularly well when Vertigo grouped all the DC mature reader titles under one banner, with sales on most of the lower-selling core Vertigo titles rising. With Vertigo, the favourites have slowly emerged, and, one year on, some titles are undergoing changes.

A recent example of family grouping was the 'Heavy Hitters' icon given to Epic's creator-owned action titles: launched in March 1993 with *Lawdog* and followed by *The Midnight Men*, *Joe Kubert's Tor*, *The Trouble With Girls* and *Untamed*, the line was received with a less than enthusiastic welcome, and the second flight of titles announced under the same banner has done relatively poorly. The family grouping in this case has worked against a potential winner in the shape of Peter David and George Perez's *Sachs & Violens* which retailers substantially under-ordered, the debut issue not even making the Diamond Top 100 charts.

A second family unit, the Midnight Sons titles, has not made the impact hoped for, with *Blaze #1* making a relatively poor showing at #46 in Diamond's Top 100. The card promotion for the cross-over series between the Midnight Sons titles has had a low response, probably itself a response for the poorly managed *Magneto #0* promotion.

Marvel UK is seen as a family unit, with the Frontier line, the 'Gene Pool' and 'Red Mist' etc, titles as sub-branches. With only one exceptionally popular character, Death's Head II, and a growth rate that quickly outpaced the number of fan-recognised names working for the company, Marvel UK have been forced to consolidate their line.

MARVEL UK

In a statement issued September 29, Lou Bank, Marvel UK's newly appointed Director of Sales, said "In conversation after conversation we keep hearing that there's simply no room to display all the new comics being produced. Compounding this problem is the fact that the inadequate display of product has hindered sell-throu[illegible] and that appears to have caused yet another problem in terms of retailer budgeting and cycling."

Editor-in-Chief Paul Neary calls the consolidation a "trimming of fat". "We've grown immensely over the last two years and along the way we've accumulated a large roster of genuinely unique characters and truly world-class creators. This cutting back allows us to place our best talent with our strongest characters, and to focus our advertising and marketing efforts."

The first move will be the cancellation of five titles: *Dark Guard* with #4, *Cyberspace 3000* with #8, *Wild Thing* with #8, *Black Axe* with #8 and *Super Soldiers* with #10. The following have been pulled from the schedule with plans for them to be reworked and released in 1994: *Bloodrush*, *Roidrage*, *Death Duty*, *Warhide*, *Removal Man vs. Motormouth*, *Ripwire*, *Tymestryke*, *Officer Outbody*, *Heavy Weapon*, *G-Force*, *Motormouth & Killpower* and *Doctor Who: Age of Chaos*. "We're not abandoning current plans," says Managing Director Vincent Conran. "We simply realise that the market is in a fragile state right now and it would be imprudent to release material which has not yet had the benefit of the proper attention it needs."

The cut-back knocks a number of titles from the schedule immediately, although 17 titles were (or are to be) shipped in both October and November. Current plans will see that schedule cut back to 12 titles a month in 1994. It also means that the hoped for expansion of the Frontier line will not take place, with Frontier editor, Michael Bennent, officially leaving Marvel UK on November 1.

MARVEL/EPIC

Gary Guzzo, Publicist for Marvel, told *Comic World*: "As far as rumours of Epic dissolving, that's not true at all. Although the next flight of books from Epic are *definitely not* going to be called 'Heavy Hitters'. We're not sure whether *Heavy Hitters* is perceived badly now, but Epic, the whole creator line, is still around and Carl [Potts, Epic's Editor] just keeps finding new projects for it." The Heavy Hitters line comes to an end in December with the concluding issues of *Sachs & Violens*, *Terrarists* and *Brats Bizarre*, all at issue 4, and *Lawdog* (the only survivor of the original line-up) at #10.

Speaking on the current state of the industry, he said "Marvel has probably had its most profitable year ever this year. But how long does it take before we compete with ourselves? That's always been the situation: at one time a person could buy all

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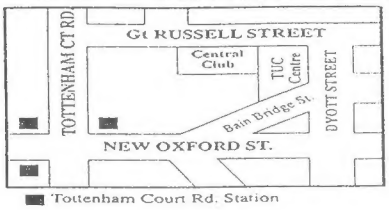

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the Marvel comics, or all the DC comics, and they're not doing that any more. They're buying all the related titles and shopping around and going outside of companies. The days of buying every single comic by any single publisher are over.

"I think we ought to look at the industry and figure out what a good circulation is because there has got to be a market for low-line books. There is certainly room for 30,000 and 40,000 selling books - there are always cult favourites. Look at Coleen Doran's *A Distant Soil*: she doesn't have to get 100,000 to survive.

"But how do we address that in a glut? When books can sell in their millions, 30,000 is deemed a failure, and we have to really examine how much editorial work you put into a low-line book. Do you get rid of the book, or try to give the same editor a book that's selling over 100,000? It takes the same amount of money to produce.

"But we don't necessarily think that's the case. If you have a direction with a book, and you have a good, solid audience you keep going. The thing about low-circulation books: at least you know its being *read*.

"I think that the whole crunch of books that came out at the start of last April [when orders for the summer months began to be processed] made the numbers of all comic books ordered realistic. I think that store owners were buying them and they weren't selling through in some cases, and I think the numbers have now adjusted. The lowest, or medium-number books will stay the same. There is not going to be a crash in those numbers - they are realistic numbers."

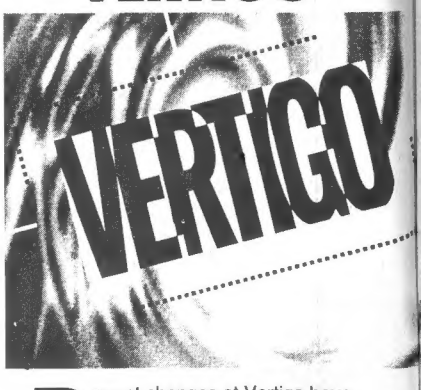
The current options open to Marvel may be three-fold: retain titles that have a steady circulation and make a steady profit for the company even though they may sell under, say, 30,000 and tie-up editorial and production time?; react to the glut of titles released in the summer by cutting back, presumably cutting from the lowest-selling titles upwards until they achieve a line of highly profitable titles only?; or cut away some of the gloss and enhancements which have pushed prices of individual issues up and forced readers on tight budgets to chose between two titles when they may have bought both? Marvel, as a publically owned company answering to shareholders, may be forced into decisions they may not necessarily want to choose despite the fact that most of their titles have circulations that could easily sustain them. The same choices may be faced by all the major publishers where smaller, privately owned companies can support low-circulation titles

At the moment, Marvel's lowest selling titles outside of licensed characters such as *Biker Mice From Mars* and *William Shatner's TekWorld* include a number of reprint titles *Marvel Tales*, *Original Ghost Rider*, *Morbius Revisited* and *Original Spider-Man*, for which production costs are far lower. The lowest selling originated titles to the direct market include *Mort the Dead Teenager*, *Sleepwalker*, *She-Hulk*, *Moon Knight*, *Groo the Wanderer*, *Conan*, *Wonder Man*, *Nomad*, *Quasar*, *Punisher Armory*, *Hellstorm*, *Silver Sable*, *Namor*, *Darkhold*, and *Darkhawk*. *Cage* and *Conan Saga* have both recently been cancelled, *She-Hulk* also cancelled at #60 this month, and *Moon Knight* will almost certain to follow at #63 unless a last-ditch storyline works. The Razorline titles created by Clive Barker are also low-selling - these including *Saint Sinner*, *Hokum & Hex*, *Ectokid* and *Hyperkind*. The newer launches such as *Hellhound* and *Pinhead* have made little impact. Other titles such as *G.I. Joe* sell poorly through the direct market but sell far better through newsstand, supermarket and toy-store outlets.

As to the question of cover enhancements, Guzzo said, "We got a lot of questions at the Philadelphia Comic Con **in October**. A lot of the fans asked why do we do the enhanced covers. The main thing was that they sold; you see increased sales figures on the enhanced covers and the perception is that the fans like it. But we do get complaints from fans about the price and that it interferes with their ability to buy other titles within our line or outside. So Marvel - since about a month ago - has been making an enhanced and a non-enhanced version of all our covers so you have a choice. That will give us another indicator of whether to keep on doing them or whether to scale it down."

The number of enhanced covers has already decreased over the past few months, anyway: "We scaled them down quite a bit because it wasn't special any more. You want them to be special, and we'll use them for events that reflect well in an enhanced cover. If nothing's going on we're not going to slap an enhanced cover on it."

VERTIGO



Recent changes at Vertigo have been creative rather than cutting: *Swamp Thing* is to be taken over by Grant Morrison & Mark Miller for 4 months before Miller takes over the title solo and *Doom Patrol* is to be drawn by Ted McKeever, with covers by Brian Bolland. The one title that has been cut back upon is John Smith's *Scarab* which is now an 8-issue mini-series rather than an ongoing title: "Looking at Vertigo, and *Scarab* in particular, series editor Stuart Moore and I agree that, as

strong as the project is, it's better to test the waters with a miniseries," said Vertigo Group Editor Karen Berger.

"What's happening," explains Tim Pilcher from DC's London office, "is that we were doing two new titles a month, and we're cutting that down to one a month. It's a controlled scaledown... although even scaledown isn't the right word, really.

"At San Diego **in August** there was a big Vertigo panel and what we found was that people were saying 'We love everything, and we want to buy it all, but we don't have the money.' So, instead of swamping ourselves, we're basically bringing out one new series a month; that way, as a mini-series finishes, a new one starts, so there's a constant flow, but we don't flood the market. The market just can't handle it at the moment. It's just being sensible and controlling ourselves."

At present, *Doom Patrol* and *Kid Eternity* are the lowest selling regular titles, with changes already in process for both: "The writing has improved [on *Doom Patrol*] from #75 and I know that Ted McKeever has redesigned Cliff Steel - he has a new body which is like a big steam engine. It should be interesting." That will happen in #76 when Cliff is blown to bits in a conflagration. We also gather that the style of *Kid Eternity* is to be made less obscure. Tom Peyer, editor on both titles has left DC to pursue a writing career (which will include *L.E.G.I.O.N. '94*) and has been replaced by Lou Stathis.

Vertigo is still picking up titles, a recent acquisition being a 4-part series, *The Inspector*, by Warren Ellis & Mark Buckingham which will appear in 1994.

RUMOUR CONTROL

Before panic sets in, it should be noted that overall sales for comics, which peaked in a exceptional April high thanks to the rebirth of Superman, mostly, plus a plethora of hot number ones, *Turok*, *Deathblow*, *Bloodstrike*, etc. (astonishingly, Marvel's highest placed title, *X-Men Unlimited #1*, was pushed deep down into the Top 20 at #18).

But if anything can be learned from any of the above it must be that the industry discovered fans' financial limitations that month, and fans have subsequently been complaining that enhancements, new titles and family-group cross-overs have forced them to make choices between titles, dropping some in favour of others. It now seems clear that the problem is being addressed, and the consolidation we are seeing is the result. The fact that many of the titles addressed - some of them addressed to death - are in mature reader and creator-owned lines is a reflection of their low-sales and/or higher production costs. The industry as a whole, however, is not in any worse position than it was in December 1992, with most companies expecting 1993 to be their best year ever.

Britain has, in general, supported mature lines better than many others: the best-selling titles in the UK are still the X-titles, but *Sandman* regularly reaches the top ten in the UK where it struggles to reach the top eighty in the US. In percentage terms it has been estimated that Britain may make up only 2-3% of the total market whilst for Vertigo titles it is 6-7%. However, consolidation should not be seen as the end of the creator-owned market, with more companies than ever offering incentives to creators, ownership of characters being the carrot that often swings the deal.

It has recently been announced that Malibu are launching their own creator-owned line under the Bravura imprint, with a starting line-up that includes Jim Starlin, Howard Chaykin, Walt Simonson and Dan Jurgens.

The first title from the new line is due to ship in January, *Breed*, a mini-series by Jim Starlin, which Starlin describes as "the story of a man who discovers he's half-human, half-demon and how he deals with his heritage." It was originally planned as three graphic novels, which Starlin now plans to write and draw as 6-issue mini-series.

Other titles include *Power & Glory*, a 4-issue series written and drawn by Howard Chaykin and a new *Star Slammers* mini-series by Walt Simonson. The original *Star Slammers* was published as a graphic novel by Marvel in 1983, the new series taking place long after the events of the earlier story. Further titles include *Edge* by Steven Grant & Gil Kane, *Deuce* by Dan Jurgens, *The Nocturnals* by Dan Brereton, *Metaphysique* by Norm Breyfogle, a title he previously published with Eclipse, and *Dreadstar* by Peter David & Ernie Colon, with creator Jim Starlin providing covers.

Malibu's publisher, Dave Olbrich, has said "We are negotiating for a handful of titles to add to the line. Each creator brings their own idea to Bravura, but it's all going to be essentially heroic, action/adventure style projects." He also added that titles would not be solicited until "it can maintain its schedule and commitment to quality".

DC at present are publishing two creator-owned titles, *Chain Gang War* and *Scarab*, plus the Milestone line copyrighted to Milestone Media. There are plans for more, including Chris Claremont's forthcoming *Sovereign 7* which may lead a new creator-owned line.

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CALIBUR PRESS

Calibur's *Negative Burn #6* anthology includes a new story, 'Vixen', by David Lloyd, a vampire tale, plus 'Mr. Mamoulian' by Brian Bolland, stories by Doug Wheeler, Elaine Lee & Craig Hamilton, and a cover by Mike Kaluta.

CHAOS! COMICS

Chaos release *Evil Ernie #0* entitled 'New Years Evil' which introduces a new character to the Evil-Horrorverse - Crush! The 32-page special includes a cover by Greg Capullo.

CONTINUITY

Michael Netzer, the artist of a number of recent DC titles including the bookshelf format *Batman/Green Arrow* title, filed a $20 million lawsuit against Neal

Adams, Adams' daughter Kristine, *Crazyman* author Peter Stone, and the companies Continuity Graphic Associates and Continuity Publishing. The charges allege that Adams has defrauded Netzer of credit and earnings for the creation of the character Ms. Mystic, and that an Arab terrorist character in *Crazyman* referred to as both Abu Netzer and Mike Nasser, is a slanderous, defamatory representation of Netzer.

Netzer, who legally changed his name from Michael Nasser in 1984, met Adams in 1975, and claims that he was the creator of Ms. Mystic in 1977, which he allowed Adams to market to DC. A 17-page story featuring the character and drawn by Nasser was later published by Pacific Comics in 1982, and reprinted by Continuity in 1987.

An early Adams portfolio with Ms. Mystic artwork credits the character to both Adams and Nesser, but Adams has claimed sole credit for her creation since. Nasser moved to Israel in 1981 and only moved back to America in 1990, claims he knew nothing of the publishing history of *Ms. Mystic*, which has had two runs from Continuity, and that Adams broke a verbal contract that any credit and profits on the character would be split 50/50.

The appearance in *Crazyman #3* referred to the character, Abu Nissir, but variously called Nasser and Netzer, as an assassin and a terrorist. Whilst dates on the charges are yet to be set, Netzer is seeking an injunction against any further circulation of *Crazyman #3*.

More problems: the *Valeria/Spawn* crossover has been cancelled for the foreseeable future. Due to appear in #s 3 & 4 it has been temporarily shelved, according to Terry Fitzgerald, speaking for Todd McFarlane Productions, because with "Valeria being late, Todd did not want to oversaturate and confuse the market with two Spawn cross-overs," the other being the *Spawn/Batman* x-over due soon. However, issue #5 of *Valeria* is still due to appear, and the missing two issues will be resolicited to appear sometime later.

In December, Continuity's 'Rise of Magic' storyline takes over *Armor #9*, *Crazyman #6*, *Earth 4 #6*, *Hybrids #3*, *Megalith #9*, *Samuree #6*, *Ms. Mystic #6* and *Time Master #2*. Also released is the *Shaman #2* a retailer incentive available for every 10 copies of the 'Rise of Magic' titles ordered. Expect this one to be scarce.

DARK HORSE

New for December are *The Mark #1* (of 4) by Mike W. Barr & Bradley Rader, a spin-off from the pages of *Dark Horse Comics* as The Mark travels to America to stop the evil

genetic research being carried out by Archon; *The Thing From Another World* rears its head again in a new 4-parter, *Eternal Vows* by David de Vries, Paul Gulacy & Dan Davis where Police Sgt. Rowan arrives in Wallace Harbor to solve a baffling series of murders; *Godzilla vs Barkley #1* is a battle between Japan's greatest monster and America's baddest basketball player, Charles Barkley (I just write it, I don't make it up, honest - and see Hamilton Comics below); *Enemy #1* by Steven Grant, Christopher Shenck & Shepherd Hendrix has the F.B.I. stalking what they think is a serial killer, or is it a malevolent force killing randomly?; *Predator: Bad Blood* by Evan Dorkin, Derek Thompson & Chris Warner sees a John Pulnick accused of a massive killing spree, and only he knows it's the work of a rogue alien predator - and a second predator arrives on the scene to hunt the rogue; and *Hammer of God: Pentathlon #1* is a one-shot featuring Judah (The Hammer) Maccabee as he represents the Planet Thune in the 2493 Martian Olympics. Mike Baron, Neil Vokes & Jay Geldhof cook-up some weird sporting action.

Arthur Adams' 'Monkeyman & O'Brien' debuts in *Dark Horse Presents #80*, which also includes part 5 of 'Hermes vs The Eyeball Kid' by Eddie Campbell, and 'Predator: The Hunted City' by Charles Moore, D. Alexander Gregory & Rob Haynes debuts in *Dark Horse Comics #16*. And don't forget *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For #2* by Frank Miller.

DEFIANT

On September 30, Marvel Comics sought a preliminary injunction in a lawsuit to prevent Defiant using the title *Warriors of Plasm* which they claimed was an infringement of the trademark claimed by the Marvel UK character, Plasmer.

The injunction was denied by Judge Michael B. Mukasey at the Southern District of Manhattan court, much to the delight of Jim Shooter who says "This is a clear cut vindication of our position in this case: we knew that we had not infringed upon their title. Obviously we're thrilled that the judge came to the same conclusion."

Although they had not announced the winners of *The Good Guys* before we went to press, Defiant made the *New York Times* when Lt. Edward Szpond, a New Jersey police officer, was interviewed, he being the model for Sgt. Nicoletti in *Warriors of Plasm*. How long will it be before other real people turn up, including the staff?

And whilst Chris Claremont's *Prudence & Caution* has yet to find an artist, Prudence will make her first appearance in *Warriors of Plasm #5* (and Glory, a.k.a. Mrs J. from *Warriors* guests in *Good Guys #2*).

ENTITY COMICS

Entity is an imprint of Express Publications, which launches the *Megaton Christmas Special #1* with features a Youngblood poster and introduction by Rob Liefeld, and *Zen Intergalactic Ninja All-New Colour Special #0* with a cover by Jae Lee and the origin of Zen.

FANTAGRAPHICS

The Big Wheel by Graham S. Chaffee is a 56-page self-contained story about urban America which Fantagraphics are comparing to the work of Alex Toth and post-Batman David Mazzucchelli, priced $6.95. There's also *Jim* by Jim Woodring, a new deluxe format series which features a fully painted 'Frank and Manhog' story; Kim & Simon Deitch's *Boulevard of Broken Dreams #1* with the story of Nate Mishkin, hero of 'The Mishkin File' (from *RAW*); and a new magazine, *I Like Comics*, Peter Bagge's compilation of interviews, comments and reviews with Julie Doucet, Michael Dougan, Gary Groth, Jim Woodring and Mary Fleener amongst others.

HAMILTON COMICS

It's that Charles Barkley again. *Sir Charles Barkley and the Referee Murders* has the slam-dunk champion accused of murder in this 64-page graphic novel. Not that I understand what slam-dunk means, but it's drawn by Joe Staton and has a script by Alan Dean Foster, which makes it unique enough. Hamilton say they will keep the comic in print through the whole basketball season. Now why didn't they do Peter Osgood or Norman Hunter comics when I was a kid?

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IMAGE

After promising to get books back on schedule, Image are resoliciting *Codename: Stryke Force #1* (without the enhanced cover and at a lower, $1.95 price), *Freak Force #1*, and *Phantom Force #2* (the last issue, #3 will not appear). Meanwhile, Todd McFarlane returns to *Spawn* with #19 which introduces a new character, The Freak; and *Stormwatch Yearbook #1* is a 48-page special.

Shadowhawk Revealed/ Shadowhawk Fact File is a 124-page flip book containing the full *Shadowhawk II* mini-series and a who's who of Shadowhawk's world, priced $12.95. *Shadowhawk III #2* will include a preview of 'Valentine' by Chance Wolf and an ashcan of U.S. Male. *Images of Shadowhawk #4* is delayed due to the late arrival of artwork and will be solicited for January.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Kitchen Sink have picked up the rights to John Wagner & Arthur Ranson's award-winning *The Button Man*. The collected edition will precede the serialisation (in *2000AD*) of *Button Man 2*.

For December they have the *Charles Burns Sketchbook* by...guess, *Druuna: Morbus Gravis* by Paolo Serpieri, the *Frank Frazetta Pillow Book*, previously unseen artwork selected by Frank, the third volume of Alan Moore & Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*, a signed and numbered hardback edition of *Violent Cases*, priced $39.95, plus a *Visions of Arzach* hardcover (priced $14.95), introduced by Harlan Ellison and collecting the six volumes of *Visions of Arzach* and featuring some incredible artwork by the likes of Brian Bolland, Will Eisner, Kelley Jones, Mike Mignola, Mike Ploog, Walt Simonson, and many more, over 50 in all.

MALIBU

The storylines running through the current Ultraverse titles will converge in December in a cross-over story, 'Breakthru', preluded in *Exiles #4* and continued in a two-part book-end *Breakthru* series by Gerard Jones & George Perez, the first part of which ships in November, the second in January

to wrap up the x-over. Alan Payne, Marketing Director at Malibu, said "Ever since the Ultraverse started, it's never been established what caused all these 'Ultras' to appear. *Breakthru* will explain why everybody got these special powers." The crossover, plotted by nine Ultraverse writers, will also flesh out much of the background of the series and raise a few new questions. To identify the x-over books, they will all have their titles split by a Breakthru logo.

Over at Rock-It Comix, there's *Lita Ford* and *Ozzy Osbourne* getting the comic strip biog. treatment.

NEMESIS

An interesting marketing ploy has all covers available in a news-stand version and a Direct Virgin edition for the direct market which has a "protective sheath" fnar, fnar. They mean a polybag with the text written on it and naked, unlettered cover artwork. New for December is *Frank #1* (of 4), a modernisation of the Frankenstein legend by D.G. Chichester & Denys Cowan. *Ultraman* also debuts, a new incarnation of the 300-foot tall superhero.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

The British small-press comic *Samurai Jam* is to be released by Slave Labor, written and drawn by Andrew Watson.

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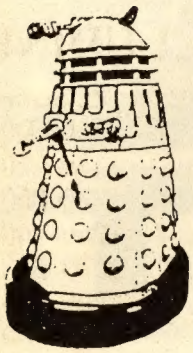

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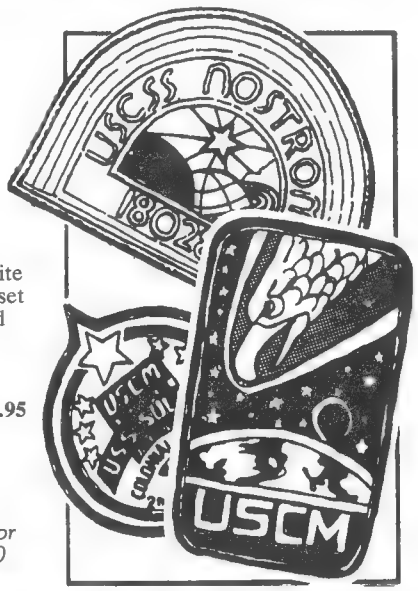

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TOPPS

Bill the Galactic Hero #1 (of 3) is an adaptation of the Harry Harrison character by Howard Zimmerman & Mike Gustovich. Bill is a happy-go-lucky farmboy who is kidnapped and brainwashed into becoming a Spaceship Trooper and embroiled in an intergalactic war with the alien Chinger. The 16-page *Zorro #0* - if you didn't get yours with any of the Topps November titles - is available solo for $1.00 with a coated cardstock cover by Brian Stelfreeze. Topps also release a 140-card *Star Wars Galaxy: Millennium Falcon* set in December.

VALIANT

Valiant have announced that to celebrate their third anniversary in 1994 they plan to launch at least two new titles, and put other characters through some drastic changes. January sees the publication of *Shadowman #0*, a *Shadowman Trade Paperback* and a cross-over with *Archer & Armstrong*; February will see the debut of *Timewalker* by Jon Hartz & Mike Leeke, and a 3-part 'Solar the Destroyer' storyline debuts in *Solar, Man of the Atom #33*, plus the *Solar Trade Paperback* reprinting the entire origin story by Barry Windsor-Smith. Bob Layton also has some drastic plans for *X-O Manowar #28* which include the end of the armor. In February they also launch the *Valiant Era Trading Card Series II*, produced by Upper Deck, although a month earlier you can find cards bagged with each title.

In March Valiant and Wizard Press publish a *Valiant Special* which will include a free 32-page *Secrets of the Valiant Universe #1* with segments from each of the titles. There's also the first of 4 Yearbooks incorporating Sherlock Holmes (!) into the Valiant Universe (!). "We'll be establishing his basis in the Valiant Universe as we team him with various characters...and revealing some surprising links between Holmes and certain Valiant characters," says Jon Hartz.

Armorines, their 16th title, will be released in June, and two further concepts are being explored at the moment; there will also be a range of Valiant cloths (T-shirts, hats, etc) and a set of fully painted trading cards by Dave Dorman.

For December they have *Bloodshot #0*, the origin of Bloodshot written & pencilled by Kevin VanHook with inks by Dick Giordano and a wraparound chromium cover by Joe Quesada, and *Magnus Robot Fighter/Nexus #1* (of 2), Valiant's second cross-company x-over, by Mike Baron & Steve Rude (inks by Gary Martin), guaranteed to be a Richard Hill buy-it-or-die title on release.

The Second Life of Doctor Mirage #5 is the first part of a Shadowman x-over which concludes in *Shadowman #23*.

And *The Valiant Era Trade Paperback* reprints the six most collectable Valiant titles in one $13.95 softcover containing *Magnus #12*, *Shadowman #8*, *Solar #10-11*, and *Eternal Warrior #4-5*, plus an 8-page *Valiant Era Special Edition* by VanHook featuring a story about the Eternal Warrior and Harada.

TOP 30

1	(1)	**X-Men #28** (Marvel)
2	(2)	**Uncanny X-Men #308** (Marvel)
3	(3)	**Spawn #18** (Image)
4	(4)	**X-Force #30** (Marvel)
5	(6)	**X-Factor #98** (Marvel)
6	(5)	**X-Men 2099 #4** (Marvel)
7	(–)	**Batman/Judge Dredd: Vendetta in Gotham** (DC)
8	(12)	**Daredevil: Man Without Fear #4** (Marvel)
9	(11)	**Batman #503** (DC)
10	(10)	**WildC.A.T.S. #6** (Image)
11	(18)	**Wolverine #77** (Marvel)
12	(16)	**Legends of the Dark Knight #56** (DC)
13	(21)	**Hellblazer #73** (DC)
14	(19)	**Spider-Man 2099 #15** (Marvel)
15	(17)	**Cable #7** (Marvel)
16	(15)	**Detective Comics #670** (DC)
17	(–)	**Sin City: A Dame to Kill For #1** (Dark Horse)
18	(–)	**Aliens/Predator: Deadliest of the Species #3** (Dark Horse)
19	(–)	**Action Comic #695 (Collectors Ed)** (DC)
20	(25)	**Previews vol 3:#11** (Diamond)
21	(9)	**Gambit #2** (Marvel)
22	(24)	**Batman: Shadow of the Bat #23** (DC)
23	(9)	**Excalibur #73** (Marvel)
24	(26)	**Amazing Spider-Man #385** (Marvel)
25	(27)	**Incredible Hulk #413** (Marvel)
26	(22)	**Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi #2** (Dark Horse)
27	(28)	**Superman #85** (DC)
28	(14)	**Lobo #2** (DC)
29	(–)	**Spider-Man #42** (Marvel)
30	(29)	**Adventures of Superman #508** (DC)

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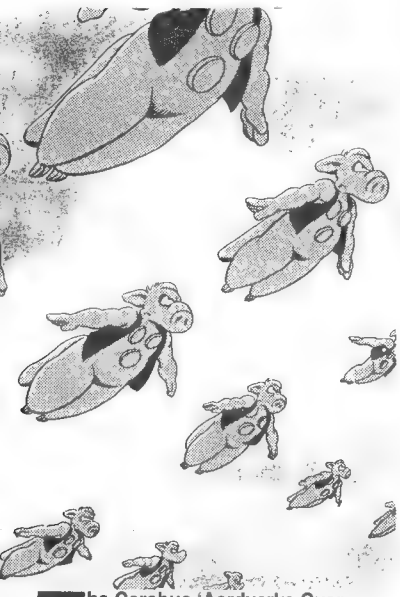
AARDVARKS OVER UK TOUR SUCCESS



The Cerebus 'Aardvarks Over UK Tour '93' covering over 2000km and including 13 stops in 15 days, finished in triumph on September 30. The tour took *Cerebus* creators Dave Sim and Gerhardt from London to Aberdeen, with an Irish Tour already promised for '94. The toughest stretch was UKCAC, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Newcastle on consecutive days. The shortest signing lasted 3 1/2 hours, the longest over 6 hours, fans travelling from as far as Austria, the US, France and Italy. In Birmingham, a queue began forming at 8am for the 4pm signing.

"We volunteered to help coordinate the Cerebus Tour because when comics like *Cerebus* reach a wider public we're going to make *real* progress in terms of an expansion of the industry and the medium itself," said Mark Simpson of Fantastic Store. "The whole campaign brought in hundreds, not dozens, of potential readers who've seldom looked at a comic book. Financially, the Saturday signing at Nottingham was our best day ever."

"The reason the Cerebus Tour was such an outstanding success was the cooperation between all the stores involved," said Stephen Holland ***No relation - Steve***. "Everyone I spoke to had that same thought in mind - cooperation." Whilst not seeing themselves as tour organisers, both Mark and Steve hope that the success of the tour will lead to more debate about how to get other critically acclaimed comic books back into the UK.

Dave Sim & Gerhardt will feature in an exclusive interview in our pages next month.

BLACKBALL

Dave Elliott's new Blackball Comics will debut in December with a number of one-shot specials before launching a regular publishing schedule in March of 1994. *Trencher X-mas Bites Holiday Blow-Out*, which Keith Giffen promises is more disgusting than anything he did with *Lobo*, will be followed in the new year by a regular *Trencher* series; *Monster Massacre* has contributions from Giffen, James O'Barr, Kev O'Neill and others, plus a Bisley cover. New for '94 will be *Maximum Force* by Elliott & Bisley and *John Pain* by Kev O'Neill. The latter two, plus *Trencher* will be featured on a 90-card Blackball Trading Cards set to be released in March by SkyBox.

DARK HORSE

Manga Mania #6 focuses on giant robots from Astroboy to Gundam, as well as continuing the usual range of strips. Meanwhile, *Total Carnage #9* presents the first episode of 'Aliens/Predator: The Deadliest of the Species' and the final round of 'Batman vs Predator'. Chris Halls provides the cover for *Aliens #18* which has the climax of 'Aliens: Cargo' and a bonus story, Chris Claremont's 'Renegade' which ties in with the Aliens/Predator series, plus a feature on the missing scenes from the original *Alien* movie, with rare photos. *Jurassic Park #6* sees the fist part of 'Raptor' by Steve Englehart & Armado Gil, and of 'Age of Reptiles' by Richard Delgado, plus the continuation of 'Xenozoic Tales'.

D.C.THOMSON

Thomson's have recently given both *Dandy* and *Beano* the full colour treatment, tied into the inevitable price rise and the release of *The Beano Video* on Polygram

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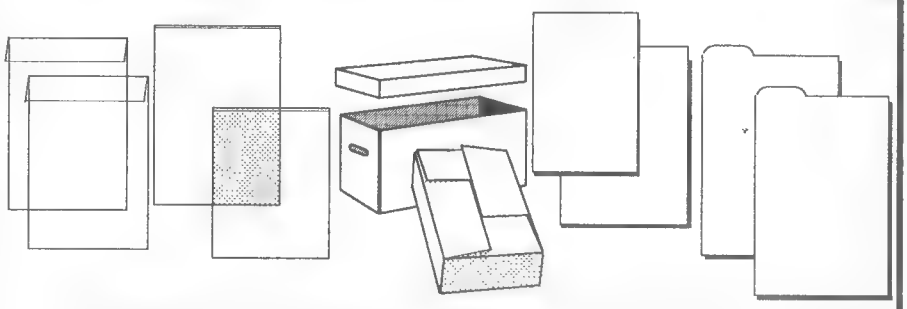

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Video (£9.99), four animated stories featuring Dennis the Menace, Minnie the Minx, The Bash Street Kids and The Three Bears. Speaking recently, editor Euen Kerr said that the makers of the video "were very keen to make it almost as if you were turning the pages of the *Beano*". Of the characters chosen, adapting Dennis to the small screen was the hardest: "He's been a difficult child all along. The problem, always, with Dennis is that you have to make him a likeable character. He can't be a little hooligan, he has to be someone the kids can identify with..he was the original punk, and so anti-authority that I think he created a bit of a stir at the time. But kids absolutely love him. Parents tended to think he was going to corrupt the entire nation - maybe he is the cause of some of the problems today..."

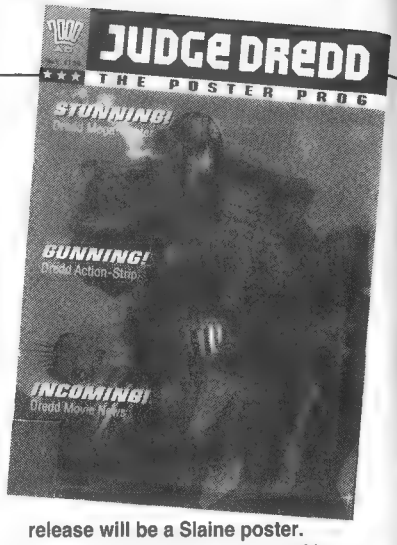
DEADLINE

Deadline #58 is a double Christmas number featuring the usual mix of music and strips by John McCrea, Roger Langridge, Rachel Ball and Nick Abadzis, plus a special Tank Girl cover and poster by Brian Bolland.

FLEETWAY

Fleetway will be releasing a large-size magazine edition of *Vendetta in Gotham*, the follow-up to the hugely successful *Judgement on Gotham*. Priced at £2.95, and due to ship November 17, it will also feature the full Cam Kennedy artwork and Mike Mignola cover.

And following the success of *The Thunderbirds Poster Magazine*, you should now be able to pick up *The 2000AD Poster Prog*, a fold out Judge Dredd poster with a 6-page Dredd story by Gregg Staples, a feature and a poster, also by Staples. The second release will be a Slaine poster.



Judge Dredd Megazine #41 introduces an all new villain, The Creep, by Si Spencer & Kevin Cullen. Meanwhile, Dredd demands the resignation of Chief Judge McGruder in 'Mechanismo', The Taxidermist continued to return, and Harke & Burr star in 'Hamster Horror Production'. The latter climaxes in *#42* which has an Ian Gibson Olympic Sex cover.

The Complete Judge Dredd #23 reprints complete the classic 'Block Mania' storyline, with art by Mike McMahon (who provides a new cover) & Brian Bolland, the events here leading up to the equally classic 'Apocalypse War' mega-epic.

PURR QUARTERLY

Purr Quarterly is a new launch from Blue Eyed Dog Productions, co-edited by music video director Simon Henwood and *Crisis* contributor Dix. Inspired by a meeting with Art Spiegelman, creator of *RAW* magazine, Henwood's connections with the music industry mean that the quarterly title has the advantage of a unique distribution deal through selected record shops as well as comic shops. Contributors include Alan Martin & Jamie Hewlett of Tank Girl fame, Ted McKeever, drawing a version of Metropol, Paul Davis, Stuart Gibbons, Henwood himself, John Howard, Lydia Lunch, Thurston Moore, Frederico Fellini, Igor Goldkind and David McKee, creator of the Mr. Men!

The title is perfect bound and printed on high quality art paper, partly in colour, and includes in the first issue a 12-page mini-comic insert.

SAVOY BOOKS

After a spirited defence of their stand against Manchester's judicial system in the *Sunday Telegraph*, and with 4,000 copies of their comics still in custody pending an appeal against their destruction, Savoy are about to launch *Reverbstorm*, described by the *Telegraph*'s Byron Rogers as 'a considerable achievement in graphic art', by artist John Coulthart. It features Lord Horror, and as it is unlikely to be widely distributed you can write to Savoy at 279 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4EW.

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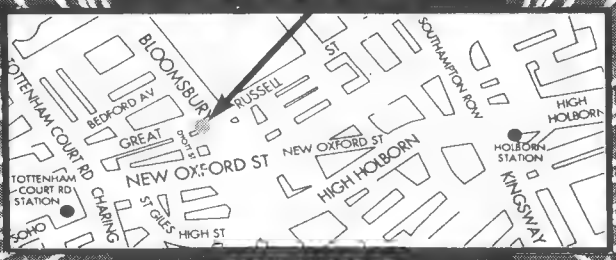

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MARVEL NEWS

AND THEN THERE WERE THREE . . .

With the death of Reed Richards in *Fantastic Four #381* being astonishingly under-capitalised by Marvel, who for a long time denied that any of the characters was to die and spent most of their June solicitation time promoting *X-Men 2099*, the question must now be 'How long for?'. Killed by Doctor Doom, it seems that the griefstricken Sue Richards will attempt to convince her team-mates to steal Dr. Doom's time platform and travel back in time to prevent Reed's death. A number of long-associated characters, such as Namor, will be making appearances in the title over the next few months, and it is said that writer Tom DeFalco has enough plot-lines to keep the series running with Reed for almost two years.

A number of characters are about to receive a shake-up over the next few months. The 'Suicide Run' crossover has already been announced for *The Punisher*, *Punisher War Journal* and *Punisher War Zone*, and will be followed by two more crossovers, 'Pariah', in which Frank Castle becomes an outcast following the events of the earlier series, all leading to 'Final Entry'. Don Daley, editor of the Punisher line, has said that the title could be prophetic, Castle having carried out his vendetta for 20 years. Whether he dies, or simply gives up, four other characters are being prepared to assume the mantle of Punisher. Now, call me a cynic, but hasn't Superman...? Marvel will be promoting the 'Suicide Run' with a 16-page insert in many of their other titles and *The Punisher Anniversary Magazine*, a 48-page special full of profiles, features and revelations about the future.

And Spider-Man is about to go through the ringer again. "We're not going to kill Peter Parker," said editor Danny Fingeroth, "but with the other things that we have planned for him, he'll wish he was dead." In *Spider-Man Unlimited #4*, shipping December 28, Spidey reveals his secret identity to the whole world. During 1994 plans are afoot to delve into the history of Parker's parents, the action beginning in a 3-part story debuting in *Amazing Spider-Man #386* which will climax in a 64-page *#388*, revealing facts that will make it easier for him to remain in his costume rather than live a real, uncostumed life. Expect some new costumes too.

ROUND-UP

Venom gets his fourth solo series in *Venom: The Enemy Within*, written by Bruce Jones with art by Bob McLeod. The series will guest star Morbius the Living Vampire and the Demongoblin. The premier issue, shipping December 28, will have a cardstock cover with glow-in-the-dark detail.

And the first 2099 crossover, the 5-part 'Fall of the Hammer', begins in *Spider-Man 2099 #16*, continuing through *Ravage 2099 #15*, *X-Men 2099 #5*, *Doom 2099 #14*, and concludes in *Punisher 2099 #13*. *Spider-Man 2099 #17* will also act as a prologue to the story which teams them up to save the floating city of Valhalla from a group of techno-Gods which include 2099 incarnations of Thor and Loki. The creators for the series, which will introduce a number of new characters, include Peter David, Pat Broderick, John Francis Moore, Ron Lim and Adam Kubert.

December also sees the climax of both 'Fall From Grace' in *Daredevil #325*, a 48-page special with a bound in poster, and *Daredevil: Man Without Fear*...The X-Men guest star in *NFL Pro Action #1*, a new football magazine from Marvel. The 12-page adventure includes a cameo by Los Angeles Raiders player Howie Long, but we're not going to get into any football talk after England's last performance...mind you, it opens up the possibility of Judge Dredd appearing in Roy of the Rovers with a guest appearance from Emlyn Hughes maybe?...late breaking news of a 2-part November title from Marvel, a

movie adaptation of Disney's *The Three Musketeers* starring Charlie Sheen, Rebecca DeMornay, Kiefer Sutherland, Gabrielle Anwar and Tim Curry...Cable makes a shocking discovery when he meets Stryfe in *Cable #8*...you can get your first glimpse of Cap's new HQ in *Captain America #424* in which Diamondback reveals that she's a murderess... *Captain Marvel: Speaking Without Concern* is a 48-page one-shot by Dwayne McDuffie, Dwight Coye, Mark D. Bright & Dennis Janson as Captain Marvel tackles racism and self doubt as she travels to New York City to battle a plague of thugs who attack people on the basis of their sex, race and sexual orientation... Venom guest stars in *Darkhawk #36*...the latest *Marvel Masterworks* reprints *The Avengers #21-30*...Steve Ditko writes an introduction and provides a new cover to the pre-Marvel horror reprint *Monster Menace #3*...a 4-part storyline begins in *Nomad #22* entitled 'American Dreamers'... *She-Hulk #60* is the last issue...bye bye, Jen...*Spider-Man: Mutant Agenda #0* is the title of the Marvel comic/newspaper strip crossover, a 48-page magazine with gaps for you to paste in the newspaper strips... Spider-Man guests in *Thunderstrike #5* and a new villain is introduced...The announcement of Scott and Jean's immanent nuptuals doesn't go down too well with Professor Xavier in *Uncanny X-Men #309*...as well as a story guesting Night Thrasher, *Web of Spider-Man #309* also includes a 6-page lead-in story to the forthcoming Lizard story which will run in *#310-311*...Peter David and Sam Kieth combine forces to bring you *Wolverine: Blood Hungry*, a 64-page bookshelf format story which will introduce Cyber...*Dragon Strike* is a 32-page one-shot, adapting the TSR fantasy game of the same name...*Alpha Flight #129*,

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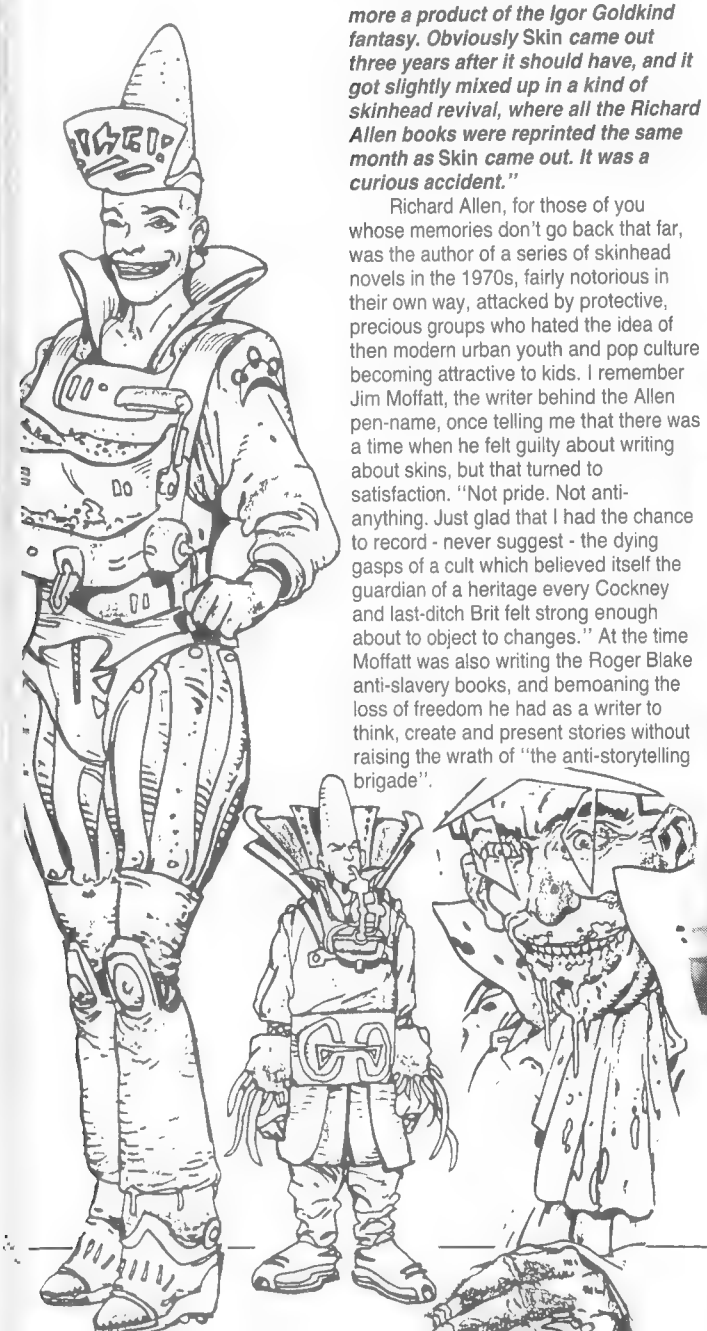
BRENDAN McCARTHY

*SINCE LAST TALKING TO BRENDAN (BACK IN ISSUE 5) WE'VE SEEN THE PUBLICATION OF SKIN AND HE'S SPENT A YEAR IN H*O*L*L*Y*W*O*O*D, RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH TOM CRUISE AND SHARON STONE AT PARAMOUNT STUDIOS AND GENERALLY HAVING A BUSY TIME ON CONEHEADS. NOW HE'S BACK IN THE UK WITH A WHOLE PILE OF NEW PROJECTS. G'WAN, ASK HIM WHAT HE'S BEEN UP TO...*

Coneheads © Paramount



"Critically* Skin *was very well received across the board," says McCarthy when I ask the inevitable opener. Having waited so long for the strip to see print, it must have been a nerve-wrecking experience to see the already notorious, already made-classic (by those who had seen it) book reach the public, protected for three years by nameless arbiters of decency and taste. "We were surprised that the response was basically very good, rather than us getting castigated. That just didn't happen, and it sold very well for Tundra.

"What do I think of it now? It was more a product of the Igor Goldkind fantasy. Obviously* Skin *came out three years after it should have, and it got slightly mixed up in a kind of skinhead revival, where all the Richard Allen books were reprinted the same month as* Skin *came out. It was a curious accident."

Richard Allen, for those of you whose memories don't go back that far, was the author of a series of skinhead novels in the 1970s, fairly notorious in their own way, attacked by protective, precious groups who hated the idea of then modern urban youth and pop culture becoming attractive to kids. I remember Jim Moffatt, the writer behind the Allen pen-name, once telling me that there was a time when he felt guilty about writing about skins, but that turned to satisfaction. "Not pride. Not anti-anything. Just glad that I had the chance to record - never suggest - the dying gasps of a cult which believed itself the guardian of a heritage every Cockney and last-ditch Brit felt strong enough about to object to changes." At the time Moffatt was also writing the Roger Blake anti-slavery books, and bemoaning the loss of freedom he had as a writer to think, create and present stories without raising the wrath of "the anti-storytelling brigade".

A decade later, the same faceless anti-storytelling brigade were holding up the publication of *Skin*. McCarthy was a skinhead himself: "If you're a certain age you used to collect all those sort of books when you were growing up - all the adventures of Jim Hawkins in *Skinhead* and *Skinhead Farewell*. Richard Allen used to do all the glam rock books as well - he should have done Marc Bolan versus Knuckle Girl!

"One of the criticisms of *Skin* was that the ending didn't work, was too abrupt, but the whole point was that it was actually designed that way because we wanted a plot that was truncated and deformed itself. The idea was that there was an oral tradition of skinhead storytelling and *Skin* was one of the stories. We had another story called 'The Skinhead Who Shagged the Bird out of Doctor Who', which was how the skinheads kidnapped her..."

Between *Skin* not being published and it finally seeing print, Brendan had produced 'Rogan Gosh' with fellow *Skin* creator, Pete Milligan, which is about to be republished by Vertigo. "It's as 'on' as Vertigo can ever be on," he says. "He was a good character, Rogan. Growing up near Southall in West London I collected all the Indian comics when I was growing up, so it's something I really love. I think it was *the* strip in *Revolver*, and it got us the Best Comic award two years ago, so somebody must have liked it.

"It's interesting to think that *Skin* didn't. I'm a bit cynical about the comic market, because just looking at the Best Graphic Novel of the year - Batman gets it. Rogan was essentially science fiction, and you realise that ultimately the market we're in is a juvenile fantasy market.

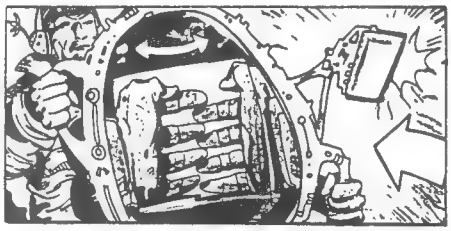
"What I can see in the market at the moment is a huge shortage of good artists. The quality is very poor."

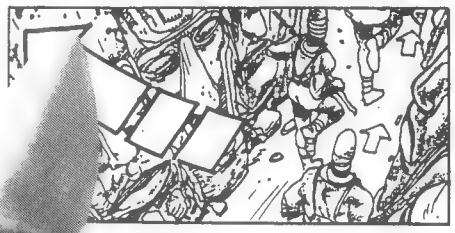
CONEHEADS

For the past year, Brendan has been working in Hollywood on *Coneheads*, which should be doing the rounds of cinemas as you read this. It's not the first time Brendan has worked in films - but it's his first experience of Tinsel Town.

HOLLYWOOD REMIX

"I've worked with the director of *Coneheads*, Steve Barron, before, on the first *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie, and that was hugely successful. He was offered *Coneheads* and phoned me up. I happened to be in Australia, and he said 'Can you come to New York tomorrow'? And I said 'Yeh'.





"So we sat around in a hotel in New York coming up with gags and ideas for a *Coneheads* movie, which Steve pitched at Lorne Michaels, the big producer of *Saturday Night Live*. He's Mr. Comedy in America, and he liked the direction. So we got the gig just by jamming in a hotel room.

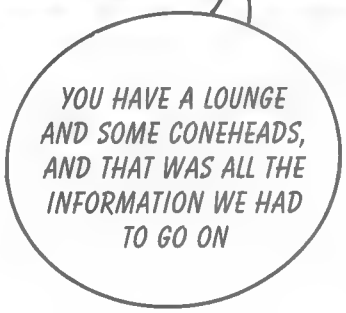
"Steve and I tend to write and do a lot of design work together, and he wanted me employed as a visual consultant so I had a free range to look over everything and design it how I wanted. I've worked with him on so much that he basically trusts my loony vision - it's the best director relationship I've got!

"I had one of those moments you get in your life when you realise something's happened. The day I arrived at Paramount and walked through the gates they said 'Mr. McCarthy, your office is in the'...Dick Van Dyke Block, or something. I went up and there was an office with my name on it; I opened the door and there was a telephone and nothing else, but to have your own little office in Paramount...well, you've made it to some level.

"From then on it was hard work. *Coneheads* existed as a sketch on *Saturday Night Live*: you had a lounge and some Coneheads, and that was all the information we had to go on. What I had to do was visualise the whole environment. The Coneheads return to their own planet, so I designed cone-shaped spaceships, and all the background design. I even designed Conehead poodles!

"Eventually a lot of these things get cut as the budget constraints come down. What you see is only 50% of the amount that was actually shot. There were three major sequences cut from the final movie - the science fiction element was quite reduced at the end - so you won't see all the environments I designed even though they were built and shot.

"Ultimately it was a Hollywood experience - which I've never had before.



You've got directors, executives... everybody including the lavatory attendant has an opinion. It's quite a nightmarish experience - there's a lot of politics."

But would he want to go back? "Oh yeh. I've always done that with comics and movies: keep going back and forth. It stops me getting bored. And it depends

what sort of project I get offered. For example, *The Shadow* movie came up, but because I'd just finished nearly a year in Hollywood I turned it down. I thought *I'd love to do The Shadow, but I just can't handle another nine months here.* Hopefully Mike Kaluta will be doing it.

"The horrible thing is that after you've done it for a bit, it loses its glamour. It just becomes a job. It sounds exciting when you read about it in magazines, but its like you editing *Comic World*. People think 'Wow! It must be amazing' and it probably is, but only for five minutes a week." Yep. I'll go along with that. The rest of it is hard work.

HORRORVILLE

Coneheads is Brendan's sixth movie, following on from the hugely successful *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* ("the biggest grossing independent movie ever"), *Enemy Mine*, *Highlander II*, *Dream Demon*, and the just-released *Mr. Wonderful* with director Anthony Minghella.

But visual designs isn't the be-all and end-all of Brendan's work in the movies: he currently has *Horrorville* optioned (and is thinking about turning it into a comic).

"That's with Universal and its got to go into script phase and all that sort of stuff, but I'm going to get involved in the writing creatively. I won't say too much about it other than that it's basically about a town that moves around on rollers in the American west. It goes up to other towns and absorbs them. It's a sort of outcrop of Hell on wheels."

Also optioned is a proposal for a television series, *Doctor Dream*, which Brendan has written. "How television shows work in America is that agents put them together in packages, If they've got a director, a writer, a producer, they put them together as a package with a project. At the moment, William Morris is packaging *Doctor Dream* with Limelight Films, which is Steve Barron's production company.

"*Doctor Dream* is basically: 'The American Dream is Dying, send for the Doctor'. I'm so used to saying this in 25 words or less! You get very sharp at all that: the knack is to mention two successful things together, like 'It's Batman meets the Terminator'. Hollywood is - if you've seen *The Player* - full of people saying 'It's like *The Sound of Music* meets *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*'."

Brendan is also on hold for the *Judge Dredd* movie, but, again, was wary of staying in Hollywood: "If it comes to England I'll probably get involved in it," he says.

"*Prince Charming* is the project I'm working on at the moment. That's Steve Barron's next feature, and he's asked me to get involved in some of the initial designs. I'm only going to get involved in it in a smaller way because I want to get back into comics.

"*Prince Charming* is basically a romantic comedy about a prince and his sidekick who get transformed into frogs in the 14th century, and eventually manage to get brought to New York 600 years later, still as frogs because nobody has kissed them yet. The prince is kissed by a hooker in Central Park. It's a sort of medieval *Crocodile Dundee*, a *Sleepless in Seattle* with fantasy elements..." There's the 25-words-or-less sell again. "The frogs are being done by computer."

There's more computer generated action in *Reboot*, a television series Brendan designed earlier this year. It's one he's very enthusiastic about. "I think it's going to be phenomenal. It's going to revolutionise Saturday Morning animation in the way that Hanna-Barbera did in the 1950s. It will be the first Saturday Morning show that won't feel like a computer animated piece; it feels really warm, but it is done on computers. It's going to freak people out - and it looks bloody good because I designed it!"

KING WEIRD

Rewind a bit. Didn't he just say 'I want to get back into comics'?

"Yeh. What I'd like to do is a bit of work-for-hire just to introduce myself into the American market as an artist, rather than it just being an obscure sideline." Or just known as the guy who did a few covers for *Shade the Changing Man.*

"Some of the stuff I did years ago...well, a lot of people are doing it now. Do you remember Mirkin the Mystic?" Yeh, it was the back-up strip in an issue of *Paradax*. "It was this old Oscar Wilde thing that now lives on as *Sebastian O* from Vertigo. It was only an 8-page thing, all 'Shall we go to the club tonight, everything is so-o-o boring'. Totally Oscar Wilde. And when *Sebastian O* came out everybody thought it was so original. If I were to do Mirkin now, people would say I was ripping off Sebastian."

And Paradax himself has had his imitators. "Well, that was Zenith wasn't it. Grant Morrison's made a good living out of my work, but what can you do? Apart from ask him to send us some royalties."

Apart from the Rogan Gosh reprint from Vertigo, Brendan also has another iron in the fire called *King Weird*, currently seeking the right publisher. "King Weird will be a creator-owned project, but at the moment a lot of creator-owned areas are being closed down - Marvel are cutting back on Epic, and Vertigo is slashing back, You have to look at things sensibly and decide who will really get behind it.

"But, as I said, I'd like to do some work-for-hire stuff. I'd quite like to do Spider-Man. I'm a great Ditko fan, and I think I'm the only person who has really done justice to psychedelic occult work since. One of my favourite comics ever was a Spider-Man/Doctor Strange team-up which Ditko did. I'm quite interested in doing something along those lines. I know team-ups have been done before, but I think it's within my power to come up with a new angle on it." CW

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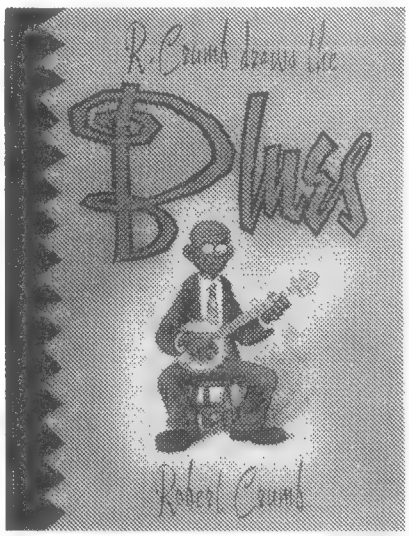

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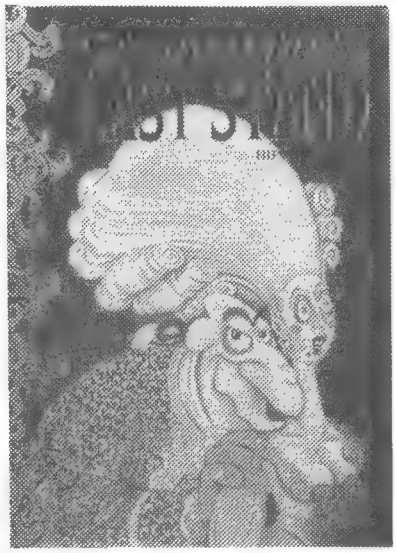

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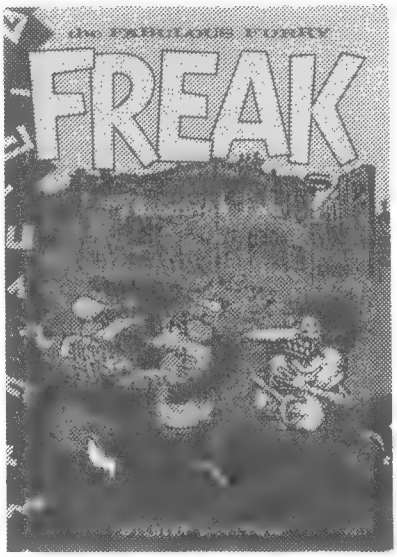

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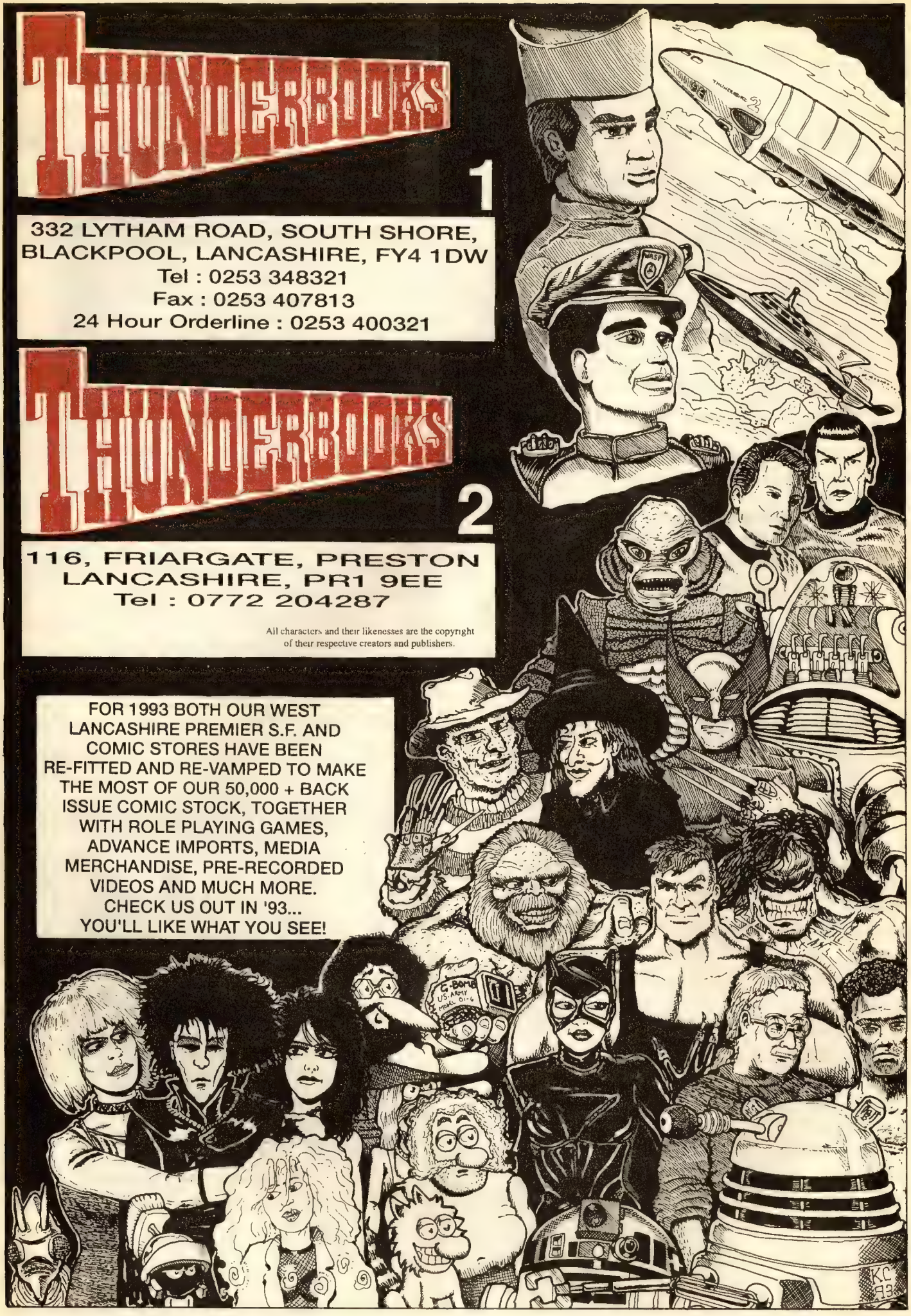
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DIRECT MARKET

James Olney of Neo Tokyo returns to the Direct Market with some thoughts on British Summer Time, Batman reruns and Anime.

By popular demand I'm back, so let's not waste any more time. I'm not going to moan about Image's release schedules or even the quality of their writing, nor am I going to have a gripe about the ever increasing tendency to use glow-in-the-dark-foil-coated-fuzzy-felt covers to promote sales of an otherwise second rate comic, I could list them but this column isn't long enough. So what am I going to complain about?

After thinking long and hard about this the only thing I could think of was the end of British Summer Time. I'm sure that most of you don't like going home from school or work in the dark, I know I don't, so it's cold and wet outside, you don't really feel like going out again, there's nothing on the telly worth watching, except the *Batman* reruns on Channel 4 (Adam West must have spent that entire series trying to hold his stomach in) or *Star Trek* on BBC 2 (keep your eyes on William Shatner's stomach as well), so what better way is there to spend the evening than to bury your face in a few dozen comics, and what better place to get them than at Neo Tokyo in Aylesbury. I know it was a shameless plug for my shop but I feel that Steve Holland's commitment to promote the comic industry far outweighs his desire to mutilate my article [Wanna bet? – Steve].

But what is worth reading I hear you shout. Firstly I'd be very wary of fancy covers and secondly you should carefully consider what you actually like to read. If you want a straightforward superhero comic then it might be worth looking at Malibu's Ultraverse stuff, if you want something a bit more mature then Dark Horse should have something you would like, or if you like good artwork but couldn't be bothered about interesting, well scripted, original stories then anything by Image should suit you (I know I promised I wouldn't moan about Image but they deserved it).

Alternatively, you could read a Japanese comic. If you've seen something like Akira on video and liked it or quite simply if you have never read any Manga then you are missing out. It's not everyone's cup of tea and in many cases you'll either hate or love the artwork, but if you can look past that you will find some of the best written comics around, particularly *Maison Ikkoku* and *Ranma 1/2*. By the way if you like Manga videos I know of a certain shop that provides a really good mail order service, hint, hint.

On the subject of videos, please restrain from making copies, I won't lecture you on it being illegal because I'm sure that you know that but what I will say is that if a company sells more tapes its production costs come down, which in turn brings retail prices down, more titles are released, sales go up, etc. So if you want to be able to choose from a large range of affordable Anime titles then you should discourage your friends from copying them because at the end of the day it is the Anime fan who will suffer. I'm not saying that you shouldn't lend your tapes to your friends, because in my opinion you should, it's the best way for it to catch on.

Oh well, I'm out of space so you can now finish reading this wonderful magazine.

Live long and prosper

James Olney – Defender of Truth

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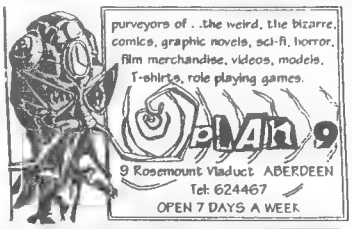
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PHIL HALL ON THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

It came as no surprise to discover the cancellation and pruning of lines from some of the major publishers. The summer has seen a massive explosion of new product and if it ain't been good, it ain't stayed the course.

The move by Marvel UK to reduce its line drastically, coupled with a distinct feeling that Marvel US is in the process of cutting back its mainstream titles and has plans for a drastic reduction in Epic Comics material, is an indication that quality is beginning to mean something again.

Image comics has finally come clean about why the six (it was seven) of them and them alone (watch out Sam Keith and Dale Keown) will now be responsible for product from Image – It's a simple case of "we are the bosses, get in line behind us, or get off the train". Hence why Keown's *Pitt* makes Rob Liefeld's comics seem frequent. Without the class of creator-owned property by true all-stars, I believe now more than ever, that the writing may be beginning to form on the wall.

We have already looked at Tundra's demise, and one must be honest when saying that Dave Elliott's replacement company BlackBall will have to offer something a little more interesting than Keith Giffen's *Trencher*, which was optioned after Image dumped the book.

Valiant, I have been asked to tell you, is not on the slide, however regardless of what I have been told by various retailers, the signs indicate that the interest in this country at least is waning. Only the pre-*Unity* stuff is holding its value. Watch out for *Harbinger 11*, which Valiant followers believe will excite the back issue market yet again. Villain, The Otherman, is to become a major player in the new *Ninjak* series. But, one must observe that just about every character ever created in the Valiant universe is regarded as collectable by Valiant die-hards. Imagine a Marvel zombie attempting to push the price of Skull the Slayer's appearances up – we're talking the same quality here.

Dark Horse is launching Legend Comics, which on the surface looks to be a sure fire winner, talented individuals such as Frank Miller, John Byrne, Mike Mignola, Paul Chadwick, Geof Darrow, Art Adams and Dave Gibbons are involved in a series of creator owned projects, which if nothing else will appeal to those comics fans who dearly miss regular work from all the above. Watch out for *Monkeyman and O'Brian* and *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*. My two tips for big things in 1994, from an imprint which should continue on the strength of its creators alone!

DC seems to be consolidating their superhero line, with the release of *Superboy* (the clone) and *Steel* (the black construction worker) from the 'Reign of Superman' storyline, and rumours are rife that the forthcoming *Zero Hour* could see the end of the DC universe as we know it. DC's sales are poor on virtually every superhero titles apart from Batman and Superman related books and *Zero Hour* will redefine the DC universe yet again, this time leaving as many as six major casualities. Vertigo seems to be on the slide as well, despite wonderful reviews and reactions from fans, only *Sandman* has managed to remain in the top 100 selling comics and the news that the book is to be cancelled will undoubtedly have fans crying in the street and writing streams of abuse to Vertigo editor Karen Berger.

What about the rest? Malibu seems to have loads of money to throw around and a lot of it is sticking, the Ultraverse is finally gaining in recognition and in a recent chart from Diamond, they featured higher in market share than Valiant did at this stage in their development – it might not mean anything, but . . . Whether we are looking at another Valiant explosion courtesy of Malibu, I will sit on the fence in judgement, the signs are good, but I'm not being optimistic this month!

Defiant is selling a lot of books, with Jim Shooter winning his court case with Marvel Comics, this may go a long way to make a big man happy, but adverse fan and retailer reactions to the *Plasm 0* fiasco, most of which is not particularly printable, Defiant may find that they have to be resiliant as well.

Back to Marvel and the big UKCAC buzz; will Marvel or won't they? Open retail shops that is. If they do, the retail industry in this country could start seeing some major casualties. How long before we see the end of Forbidden Planets, Comics Showcase and Stateside Comics in the big city high streets. Marvel has more than enough money to push the existing big boys out, I'm not saying that this will happen for sure, but what chance does a featherweight have against a heavyweight if put in the same ring? In truth, Britain could be used as a yard stick, opening a couple of shops, to see if the market appreciates it and thus opening the door to the US (no company wants to experiment on their own front doorstep, when someone else can be far more accommodating).

With cancellations imminent, the possibility of corporation owned retail chains, a plethora of creator owned titles and a continuing drop in quality, times are looking potentially rocky for everyone involved in the industry. We saw a massive explosion of comics interest in the 1960s an implosion during the 1970s and we saw the drastic decline of the first wave of independent publishers in the 1980s. The 1990s seemed to be emulating the 1960s for a few seconds back in 1991, now it seems to be modelling itself on the mid-seventies.

I'm probably going to be wrong and we will see 2000 comic shops in Britain by the year 2000, we will have 1500 titles per month and everyone and his brother will be following the adventures of *The X-Men*, *Batman*, *Spider-Man*, *Spawn* and *Middle-aged terminally-ill photon-blasting Jellyfish*. If we don't, I think that this ever-increasing age of "Nintendo-style-comics" will eventually change the face of the industry, pushing the interesting, diverse and genuinely independent comics into a new underground.

On a far lighter note and a real boon for X-Men fans: Chris Claremont is returning to write the X-Men and is to be joined by Barry Windsor-Smith on the art chores. What a team eh? Shame the story is over four years old and was written and drawn before both these industry stalwarts ceased working for Marvel. Confused? You shouldn't be. Any one remember the two wonderful *LifeDeath* stories that appeared in the X-Men back in the early eighties? Originally planned to be a trilogy, the third part was finished, but because of editorial changes in the direction of the book, it never saw print. Rumour has it, thanks to some improvised scripting by Scott Lobdell and some ingenious inking by Dan Green, the story has been brought up to date and will appear as the conclusion to the Storm/Forge relationship, which has been on and off since the mutant inventor's introduction to the comic.

Still on Claremont and the mutants, the long anticipated *True Friends*, orginally scheduled to appear in two graphic novels back in 1991 is to see the light of days as well in 1994. Written by Claremont with art by Rick Leonardi and Terry Austin, the story tells of Kitty Pryde and Rachel Summers battle with the Shadow King in 1910, how the future is changed and how Kitty and Rachel have to return to 1910, relive their original nightmare and prevent the future being changed again.

Thanks to all the people who came over and chatted with me at UKCAC '93, it was interesting to hear the views of fans and views of retailers. The fans in general agreed with most of my predictions and gripes, many offered tips and suggestions for future columns. The retailers on the other hand are beginning to find Don't Get Caught and *Comic International*'s Movers and Shakers spending less time telling people what's hot, and more time spotlighting what's not.

If the publishers were producing anything worth plugging, don't you think I would have helped promote its potential? What is a sign of the times however is that retailers are having problems shifting overstocks of would-be hot books, columns such as this are the life blood of retailers because *you* read them and take the gamble. If there is nothing to get excited about, there is little activity at comic shops and marts. Everyone knows when a book should be hot: take *Daredevil: Man without Fear* as an example, it is and has been a definite success, but because of its print run it will never really attain the status that has been forced on pre-*Unity* Valiants. Every dealer is selling a lot of this Frank Miller and John Romita Jr book, but I can't see it becoming more than a cover price book in the next ten years.

So, as I end another column without so much as a speculators tip, I tell the dealers who read my column: when there is something worth telling people about I will, until then you're just going to have to put up with – as one young *Comic World* fan said at UKCAC – the poor-man's Peter David.

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OVER THE RAINBOW

"When I graduated from high school, we had a revolutionary picture on the cover of our yearbook. It was the first view of Earth from space. The first concept of our planet as a unified entity. And, as people have observed who have been up there, you can't see the little dotted lines dividing nations. What you see is one beautiful, fragile, interlocked system." C.J. Cherryh, quoted by Stan Nicholls.

When Yuri Andreyevich Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth in 1961, I wonder if he expected to see a world or an atlas? We're taught from birth that nations are divided, are different colours and creeds. Looking down on the world beneath him was Yuri the first man to realise that we were all sitting on the same globe?

All part of one cohesive universe?

The comic industry is universe mad, says Frank Miller, or will say if you're reading this issue in the right order, and it dates back to the birth of Marvel, way back in 1939 and the publication of Marvel Comics #1. *Marvel were known as Timely Comics, and were about to establish the trends that have been the byword for Marvel ever since. In that first issue Carl Burgos drew The Human Torch, an android who burst into flame when he was exposed to the air, sharing the title with Bill Everett's The Sub-Mariner, the result of a liaison between an American naval officer and a princess from Atlantis. By issue 8 (of the renamed* Marvel Mystery Comics*) the two were slugging it out in the first ever Marvel crossover, albeit in the same title. Sub-Mariner got a new costume in #13, and the two were teamed up again by #17. Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose.*

Alex Ross has had a brief but notable career in comics to date. His first professional strip was *Terminator: The Burning Earth* for Now Comics in 1990 followed by a *Miracleman: Apocrypha* story for Eclipse. His first contact with his *Marvels* writer, Kurt Busiek came with a short story drawn for the bookshelf format shared-universe anthology, *Open Space*, which Busiek was editing for Marvel; the story never saw print, but Busiek became the catalyst that would eventually see *Marvels* finally reach the shelves.

WE'RE GIVING YOU AN IDEA OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO HAVE BEEN THERE

"The original germ of an idea came in 1990," says Ross, "and I produced about 20 pages of full-colour artwork for a proposal I was intending to submit. It didn't really get around until by accident: Kurt Busiek was helping me out by showing some of my work and samples to Eclipse and they wanted me to do a Clive Barker story - and Clive wanted me to do a *Hellraiser* story for Marvel, so really it was Clive who got my samples in front of Marc McLaurin. And when he saw the samples he was saying 'Wait a minute, what's this *Marvels* story? Did we publish this?'.

"It led to an interest in the concept, which wasn't much of a concept at that point. Not yet. I had a very loose idea of what I wanted, but it was when I linked up with Kurt that it fell into place and became more than just a painted comic."

That it *is* something special, and one look at the artwork had me convinced, is echoed by editor Marc McLaurin who crackles enthusiasm across the Atlantic phone-line: "I've just seen the pages for issue three, and they're even better than what you've seen!"

"If there's anything I ever questioned it was the quality of the work I was putting into it," is the astonishing claim by Ross. "I'm always judging myself. I'm never really hitting the mark of what I initially envision." If you could package that vision, I'd be first in line to buy some. I put his comments down to pre-publication nerves.

"But I feel very strongly about the script that Kurt supplied and especially the ideas that were coming out of the script. There are so many different hints of thoughts and concepts that it really inspired me. I feel I've got to kill myself to do the script justice - Kurt's every bit as responsible for some of those images you see because he pushed me in the right direction and a lot of the effects we have were not just my ideas. He provided a lot of the visual impact."

MARVELS

"There's nothing I can't tell you even right up to the last issue, because it's all history." This is the sort of wide open response every interviewer wants to hear, and the point we issue a SPOILER WARNING (jump forward to the next sub-heading if you don't want to know all the intimate details). So, tell us about *Marvels*, Alex.

"Basically, the strongest point of the whole thing, is that we're giving you an idea of what it was like to have been there at the beginning of the Marvel Universe, when 20th century Earth as we know it suddenly changed and went off in a different direction. Suddenly there were superheroes, beginning with the original Human Torch in 1939, and then the appearance of the Sub-Mariner; these two battle it out in New York. We're trying to give it a feeling its never had before, which is that if you were living in this world, you wouldn't look at these guys as heroes: you'd look at them as dangerous monsters."

That moment where the timelines for Earth and Marvel-Earth forked, the moment when trembling humanity suddenly realised it wasn't in Kansas anymore, comes early in *Marvels #1*. Phil Sheldon, the photojournalist hero of the series is amongst the reporters covering the story of a burning man, dubbed The Human Torch in the following days papers; headlines scream BLAZING FREAK OF SCIENCE at a terrified public. Soon the papers report the escape of the Sub-Mariner from prison and the electric chair which he has been sentenced to. And then...

"When Captain America appeared on the scene that kind of changed everything around. He was somebody that people could identify with, and he was very much on our side.

"That pretty much covers the first book: a lot of recurring battles between the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner and the affect they have on the people living in the U.S. We wind up with a scene where a whole host of Golden Age Marvel characters are parachuted into a German stronghold." The war with the Nazi's turns these inhuman characters into heroes, their exploits followed by cheering crowds on newsreel.

"By the end of the first issue our main character has had to come to grips with living with these kind of creatures in his world; he's personally affected by them in the sense that his job as a photojournalist is to follow them around. He has been injured in one of the fights between the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner - he loses an eye - and throughout the rest of the series he wears an eyepatch.

"With the second issue there's a step forward with his experiences. He married the girl who was his girlfriend in the first issue and they now have two kids. It's now about 1964 and there's a second resurgence of superheroes like the Fantastic Four, the Avengers and the X-Men.

"And there's a dichotomy: the Fantastic Four and the Avengers are received almost as pop icons, the way the Beatles were in the '60s. But the X-Men are feared and loathed. It's almost like a racial hatred for them. Phil Sheldon approaches the whole thing with his own hatred, which is later turned when a mutant child stows away with his two young girls. He has to reconsider his whole concept of 'are they really villains or is it just a mistake'.

"The whole issue is an analogy: the Fantastic Four's celebrity status has a counterpart with the Beatles and the British invasion of the sixties, and the X-Men/mutant hatred has a counterpart in the racial unrest that was within the U.S. at the time."

You will appreciate that Marvel Time and Real Time are only distant cousins (like Greenwich Mean Time and British Summer Time - related but not the same). This might not be Kansas, Toto, but it looks mighty familiar:

"We can't *say* it's 1964 because the characters haven't aged for about thirty years, but the clothing, the cars, the

All characters © Marvel Entertainment Group

whole package really looks like its from that period of time." It's the result of a lot of research: "We both researched the original material. If we didn't have actual copies of the comics, like with the Golden Age stuff, we were looking at microfiche. So I was able to study up on the actual stories; I never wanted to recreate something until I've seen what it originally looked like, especially with the Galactus issue. I was sitting, head in hand, with a copy of the original story by Jack Kirby, studying it page for page because I was going to have to recreate so much of that imagery.

The third issue is like passing through the world of the Munchkins and taking a stroll far down the Yellow Brick Road to even stranger lands.

"The third issue focuses on the coming of Galactus and how watching the world on the brink of disaster being saved by the Fantastic Four had an effect on people everywhere. At the time people weren't really respectful of these superheroes, and even after the world has been saved it's almost as if they're embarrassed that they were so fearful before. They almost turn right around to the superheroes and blame them, almost saying 'We weren't on the brink of death at all, it was all a hoax'.

"It's a very dissatisfying period for them, and that's the way we enter the fourth issue, which documents the Kree-Skull War and continues up to the death of Gwen Stacy, Spider-Man's first girlfriend.

"When George Stacy is murdered, Phil Sheldon goes out of his way to try and prove Spider-Man innocent, made more determined because he believes the world hasn't been giving these characters their dues. He goes to a lot of trouble to talk to people - he even talks to Doctor Octopus - to find out what the actual events were; he gets to know Gwen Stacy first hand and gets closely involved with her. At the end of the story he witnesses her kidnapping by the Green Goblin, and her subsequent death at his hands more-or-less trashes his spirit at the end of the story. By the fourth issue he's got an assistant - he's quite old by this time, a sort of nebulous age between 40 and 65, as we have to make it very flexible - and he symbolically passes on his camera in the sense that you have to have a new eye for wonder when you look at this world: nothing really phases him in this world any more, having lived with these heroes from the beginning.

"That's pretty much the whole story. Is that more than you needed? Or cared to hear? You don't actually need to buy it now."

MORE MARVELS

Welcome back those of you who dodged the last section. Boy, did you miss something, especially the bit about Mr. Fantastic and Invisible Woman...you mean you all missed it? Well, in issue two...oh, just wait and see. Let's just say that it isn't quite the day the radiant bride had hoped for.

Where were we? Not in Kansas, that's where. Photojournalist Phil Sheldon has journeyed far and met some very strange folk along the way, had some of the basic concepts he held true about a world of superhumans trashed, much as Dorothy discovered after melting the Wicked Witch of the West and then finally getting to meet the Mighty Oz. Sheldon's journey through the Marvel Universe has much the same feel, and *Marvels* - outside of the fact that it is visually stunning - should have the condensed impact on newcomers of over fifty years of continuity.

"WE WEREN'T ON THE BRINK OF DEATH AT ALL"

Ross has remained faithful to many of the original highlights to be found in the Marvel Universe. "I had a love for those Golden Age characters, the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, and they've almost been...not forgotten, but their impact within comics is not what it used to be. The further you go back in time, the more pure concepts you find, and they were two of the purest concepts that were ever created." But, although the series does include the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, the X-Men, Galactus (I warned you article-hoppers you were missing something), there were some characters he regretted not being able to use: "The original proposal had a 12-page retelling of the origin of the Human Torch and 8-pages of sketches of characters I really wanted to put in the series, two of which never got in at all: Doctor Doom and The Black Panther. Yeh, I do regret not getting to illustrate them."

With so much talk of the past, it's only natural that we should end on the future - for both Alex Ross and *Marvels*. Ross shies away from the question of his artistic future: "I've a number of ideas for projects but I'm keeping mum about them. I've not formally pitched anything to anybody. At this point there's so much work left to be done on *Marvels*: I haven't finished the fourth issue yet, that's another four months down the road, so it's quite a while before I need to get serious about what I'm doing with my life."

So what about the future of *Marvels* itself. "There is going to be a sequel, and I'm not doing it!" says Ross with a mixture of feigned surprise and relief. "The sequel is also by Kurt Busiek who has a good concept for it, something that involves different characters and their experiences living in the Marvel Universe. It goes into the more darker aspects of the late '70s and '80s, leading up to today, experiences with living in the world of The Punisher and Elektra and the modern X-Men and Ghost Rider.

"The painter who's following me on this is really fantastic. He'll do a phenomenal job - he's already breathing down my neck. The second series will be a real popularity focus. All the fans out there who want to see these other characters painted will get the chance, it just won't be by me."

Ross obviously prefers the purity of the earlier characters, and if you agree with him there's a simple way to escape the darkness of the current Marvel Universe. Just close your eyes, tap your heels together three times and say 'There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's no place like home...'

Or buy a copy of *Marvels*. CW

IN A MARKET DEVOID OF NEW IDEAS WE'VE COME UP WITH A BETTER IDEA!

ALAN·DAVIS'

THE CLANDESTINE™

PROOF THAT DEAD '60s HEROES SHOULD STAY DEAD!

- FOUR ISSUES BEGINNING JANUARY
- BY ALAN DAVIS AND MARK FARMER

MARVEL COMICS UK

WE'VE GOT VISION AND THE REST OF THE INDUSTRY'S WEARING BIFOCALS!

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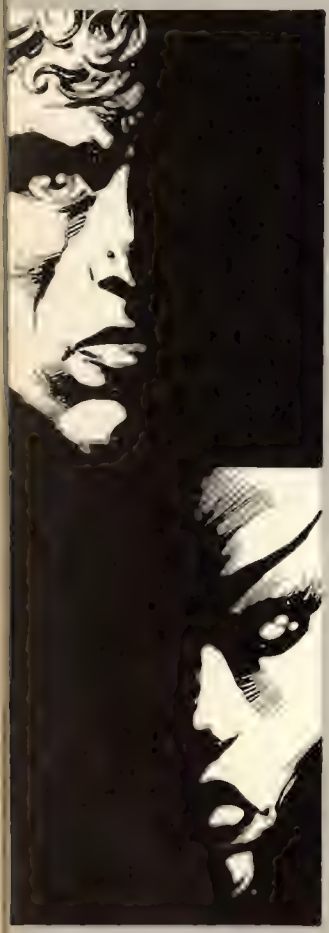
ALAN DAVIS

Magical Mystery Tour

THIS WASN'T GOING TO BE A FAIR CONTEST. IN THE RED CORNER THE RAVAGING HORDES OF THE COMICS PRESS, AS REPRESENTED BY YOUR INTREPID REPORTER ALAN WOOLLCOMBE. IN THE BLUE CORNER ***ALAN DAVIS****, THE ARTIST-WRITER BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF* ***EXCALIBUR*** *AND BEFORE THAT CO-CREATOR OF CAPTAIN BRITAIN AS WE KNOW HIM. MY MISSION, SHOULD I DECIDE TO ACCEPT IT, WAS TO GET THE EVER-RECLUSIVE MR DAVIS TO SPILL THE BEANS ABOUT HIS LATEST OPUS FOR MARVEL UK,* ***THE CLANDESTINE****. HIS JOB WAS FAR SIMPLER: ARMED WITH AN ABIDING CAUTION OF THE PERILS OF LOOSE TALK, ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS TO KEEP AS MUCH OF HIS NEW BABY UNDER WRAPS AS POSSIBLE. DING-DING, ROUND ONE. . . .*

"No, no, you've got it wrong. It's* not *the Clan Destine, it's* The Clandestine.*" Not a promising start, but Alan Davis isn't being picky, just taking care that I have the name of his new series down right. Although the series is under the auspices of his old roost, Marvel UK, with inking provided by his old cohort Mark Farmer, in two very important respects* The Clandestine *represents a new departure for Davis. For starters, it is his first solo flight as writer-artist on a new series. Secondly, the series is* his *creation, over which he has as much control as it is possible to have without owning it outright. He may not publish* The Clandestine, *but there is no doubt whose baby it is.



So who – or what – are *The Clandestine*? "The Clandestine are a super-hero group with all the trappings of regular Marvel comics because they operate inside the Marvel Universe." Having labelled them super-heroes, however, Davis instantly backtracks: "They're definitely not a traditional super-group – it's not like *Avengers assemble!* and every super-hero on the continent rallies round the one focus. They're a half-human family born with super-powers. I'm aiming for something with the flavour of the Addams family and the way that they exist and bear no responsibility for themselves or for anything else around them. It's that sort of weirdness, not the comedy, that I've been concentrating on."

Not so much super-heroes as anti-heroes? "Something like that. They live all over the world and they drift in and out of each others' lives. They do have a sort of family commitment but, as in a real family, they're each pursuing their own agenda. They're not out to dominate the world or anything like that, but basically just looking after what they want, and they use their abilities to get what they want. That's the key to how they operate and so, rather than being black and white, the tone of the book will be in varying shades of grey."

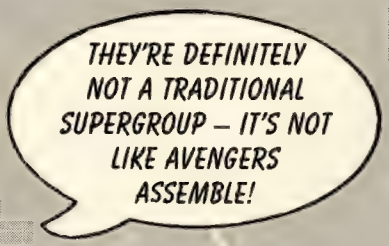
Which is where the name comes in. "The Clandestine are the people walking round in grey suits because they don't want anyone to notice them. I wanted it to be a family name and *clan* was the only synonym that hadn't been used in any way that I could see. I went through a whole load of celtic-sounding names and at two o'clock one morning I thought *The Clandestine: clandestine* (as one word) meaning secret, *clan* meaning family and *destine* (which is the family surname) meaning destiny. Basically this group is a family living in secret, so the name suits. Would you like a cup of tea?"

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

While Davis makes the tea and points out his fine array of dinosaur models, I review what I already know about the title from my mole at Marvel: printed in the standard American comic format, it will debut as a one-off preview ("probably issue zero") this month, with a four part ("don't call it a mini-series"), er, *limited* series hot on its heels. Then, *sans* the customary pause to check the till receipts, it has already been awarded a permanent fixture in the publisher's catalogue. *That's* how confident Marvel are of Davis's, and the series', pulling power. They could well have a point.

In the meantime I try coaxing a few name, rank and number details out of mine host. "There are seven principal characters but the three main ones appear in the limited series, along with others that are killed off in that first story. The family is totally self-reliant – they do use people but there won't be any supporting cast like a butler; that won't be something that I focus on. There's a wide age range of family members, the youngest being children and the oldest being incredibly old, beyond a normal human lifespan. It's the children that create the situation which starts the whole ball rolling by being very positive and enthusiastic about what they can do for mankind whereas the rest of the family, which has been around for a long time, don't really care what man is doing."

However, don't expect a wide span of relations, Uncle Tom Addams, sorry, *Destine*, and all. We're talking your bog-standard, half-human, nuclear family here: two parents and their mostly grown-up brood is all, and it's the two youngest children and their guardian who are the leading players. "They're very young teenagers, twins. The boy, Roy, who calls himself the Crimson Crusader, can manipulate gravity so amongst other things he can fly. His sister Pandora (codenamed Imp) controls radiant energy – for instance, she can generate a force beam from her eyes. Both of them have powers that they themselves don't know how they work and they don't think their relatives will understand the fact that they are super-human. What they don't realise is that they're *all* super-human too." Jammies off, costumes on, the twins sneak out at night to fight crime because they want to be super-heroes. Lumme, Greyfriars was never like this. . .



Playing matron in this saga of naughty nightly escapades is their Big Brother, Walter. "He has been bringing them up. He changes size and, being the strong guy, he is Hulkish but he is not going to be exactly like the Hulk. He has the most basic formula-style power but the way it affects him is slightly different. The kids call him wallop, which is the sound that is made when he hits people."

Of the remaining four regulars, Davis is unwilling to concede more than the skimpiest of biographical details on grounds of work-in-progress: "With the characters, I have their names but their powers will be developed as they go along and this is true of all the group. My intention is to give them little, controllable powers that they use in a more intelligent way rather than making them huge, cosmic figures able to do anything and then having to give myself convenient let-out clauses all the time. Everybody has traditional powers (the strong guy, the telepath, and so on) but the significance is in the way they will operate. I'd rather not say who can do what because that will trivialize the way that I want it to unfold."

Having barred the gate to further enquiries in this direction, the creator then tosses a few crumbs my way. "Argent can generate a metallic protoplasm. She can give herself armour and use it as weapons. I can't tell you her family name for the moment – it's being checked. [This is a reference to the requirement on all comic companies to check that any character names are not already in use.] Vex – or Dominic – has the negative ability of hyper-sensitivity. He can sus anything out by analysing what is going on, he can see it all at once, but it does take a tremendous effort for him to stay focussed like that and he has been driven slightly manic by what he knows. There is also a woman called Kay Sera (or Kimeara) who is a telepath, but how that power is going to manifest itself depends on what happens as I go along."

That's the kids accounted for. What about the parents? "The father, who is simply Adam Destine, is hundreds of years old and has powers, the nature of which are tied up into the story too much for me to reveal. He was totally human before his spouse gave him the powers." Yet if papa Destine has no codename, Mrs D has no name at all: "She pops up every now and then but she is so alien there is no way to actually describe her. She takes on a semi-human form but there is no way to relate it to what we're doing. She doesn't come from any definable reality – it's totally outside human experience."

BACK TO THE BATCAVE

What reunites this worldwide family diaspora back at the ancestral home ("in a fictional location somewhere in England") is a threat to the whole tribe. Despite being scattered across the globe under a host of disguises and assumed names, family members are being bumped off by – well, who? The writer drops a few well-used Marvel names – AIM, Modok, the *Silver Surfer* – till my look of incredulity forces him to own up that the bad guy is nobody we've seen before. "There will be a solid story mystery across the first four issues which will be wrapped up in the fourth issue with the conclusion of the mini-series [*limited series, surely? – Steve*]. The bad guy will only be revealed then." So where do AIM, Modok and the Surfer fit in? "They appear briefly in the first issue. They have precise uses inside the context of the story, but only so that the story is faithful to the Marvel Universe. I can use them for three pages only and anyone who reads Marvel comics knows who they are. I don't have to explain any of it: that's an advantage of working inside the Marvel Universe."

Working inside the Marvel Universe is what Alan Davis had done throughout most of his twelve-year comics career. Apart from a stint drawing *Batman & The Outsiders* for DC, his canon has been

Art: Alan Davis/ Mark Farmer. Clandestine © Alan Davis

dominated by two long runs on Marvel titles: *Captain Britain* for the Brits and *Excalibur* for the Americans. His commitment to whatever title he is working on is legendary, so it follows that it must have taken an almighty degree of dissastifaction to provoke him into quitting *Exaclibur*.

There was. Despite the title being left to sink or swim under its own merits (throughout Davis's entire tenure as writer-artist on the series it never had any publicity lavished on it, in cruel contrast to its fellow X-titles: euphemistically Marvel high-ups termed it *word of mouth advertising*), sales were on the up and for many Marvel fans Alan Davis was the undisputed guv'nor. That much at least was public knowledge.

Beyond that, Davis is suprisingly candid. "There was the obvious reason that *Excaliber* was never promoted in any way. It was meant to be one of the X-books but I didn't want it to be related to the X-books because I didn't like what was going on in them. I thought that they were just resting on their laurels and that the characters in them had no substance. It was really good working with [editor] Terry Kavanagh because he let me do a lot of things that other editors would have stopped and encouraged me to do what I do best, but in the end I got to the point where I felt I had to write and draw defensively because of what was going on elsewhere or because the colouring wasn't very good. Basically I got pissed off with what Marvel America were doing."

In the light of such massive disenchantment, his subsequent signing for Marvel UK seemed perverse, particularly in view of the avalanche of offers from rival publishers. "In many ways it was a cyclical thing. Paul Neary [Marvel UK editor-in-chief and editor on *The Clandestine*, as well as Davis's former inker] was the person who gave me my first every comic work – he was the editor-in-chief at Marvel when I started on *Captain Britain*. Mark Farmer [his regular inker on both *Excalibur* and *The Clandestine*] was very nervous about returning to Marvel UK because he thought it was a big backward step, but I would much rather work for a company that is smaller and trying harder than one that thinks it is so big it can do whatever it wants."

Davis is fulsome in his praises of Neary's editorial capabilities and likewise about Mark Farmer's inking ability. "I am fortunate to be working with them both. You do need someone who cares enough about what you're doing and are good at their jobs, and they're all of that and friends too."

In fact despite the *Excalibur* debacle, the auteur is a happy man. "I feel incredibly lucky to be working in comics, doing a job which I would do as a hobby if I wasn't being paid for it. What I want to do is to try to enjoy doing it, and to do it to the quality that I would have liked to have done it when I first got into comics. To me that is enough." CW

*"I'M THE LAST PERSON TO ASK TO PUT CONTINUITY STRAIGHT. I'M MORE A DEMOLITION MAN" SAYS FRANK MILLER. BEST KNOWN TO THE WORLD FOR HIS DECONSTRUCTION OF BATMAN IN **THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS** AND **BATMAN: YEAR ONE**, FRANK HAS BEEN ONE OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN COMICS SINCE HIS PEN FIRST TOUCHED THE PAGES OF **DAREDEVIL** IN 1979. NOW, IN 1993, HE HAS RETURNED TO DAREDEVIL FOR **THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR**, REWORKING THE ORIGIN OF THE CHARACTER INTO COHESIVE FORM, A VIRTUOSO ACT OF DEMOLITION AND RECONSTRUCTION. AT LONG LAST, FOLKS – AND I'VE BEEN WAITING TO USE THIS TITLE FOR YEARS –*

IT'S Miller Tin

THE CHANCE TO DO HIM WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER WOULD BE QUITE A FUN CHALLENGE

SAVAGE NIGHT

If, only. We're separated by eight hours according to the clocks, but when it comes to the weather in Los Angeles which inspired Frank to write those lines and the weather in Colchester as I read them, we may as well be in a different dimension. It's a rain and thunder night; butterflies have been flapping their wings the world over and we're paying for it with the mother of all chaos storms the first time we speak, late September. The second time we speak, the same words buzzing out of the cassette in early October, there's a bullet-crack of lightning that takes out the power across the town, and everything plunges into dark silence, broken a few seconds later by a staccato drumroll of thunder that builds until it fills the black and rattles the windows with its roar, drowning out the pathetic dieing hum of the PC as the harddisk spins down and croaks.

When the power returns and the lights flicker-flick on, everything I'd written has vanished into the ether, or cyberspace, some graveyard for lost words somewhere. I start all over again, cursing and backing-up every new word.

If it hadn't happened, and this tragic little tale was never told, this is what you might have seen...

PLAYBACK

New readers start here.

At 15, Matt Murdock was blinded when he saved a man's life, tumbling the blind old man out of the path of an army haulage truck which careers uncontrolled towards him, its driver unable to breath, a fist gripping his heart. As Matt lays stunned in the road the truck swerves and tips, spilling its load of radio-active material. Canisters shatter beside him, and Matt, raising his head, looks into the heart of a man-made sun, the last thing he will ever see.

Then, weeks of rehabilitation surrounded by disinfectant and the stabbing prick of needles before returning to Hell's Kitchen, his home, and the growing realisation that the radiation that burned in his blood had changed him, making his other senses more acute to compensate for the loss of one, his sense of touch so subtle that he can read the impressions made by a pen on paper, his sense of smell so strong that he can identify a person by the brand of perfume they wear, his sense of hearing sharp enough to hear the beat of a man's heart. Strangest of all was the radar-sense which allowed him to 'see' even in his self-contained darkness.

In real life, Murdock became an attorney, blindly fighting for justice every day. At night he was Daredevil, the Man Without Fear, an incredible acrobat able to dance across the rooftops, leap from buildings and bound across streetlights. Thank God every building in New York has a flagpole - but then this is the Marvel Universe, full of superheroes and one hell of a lot of flag-waving.

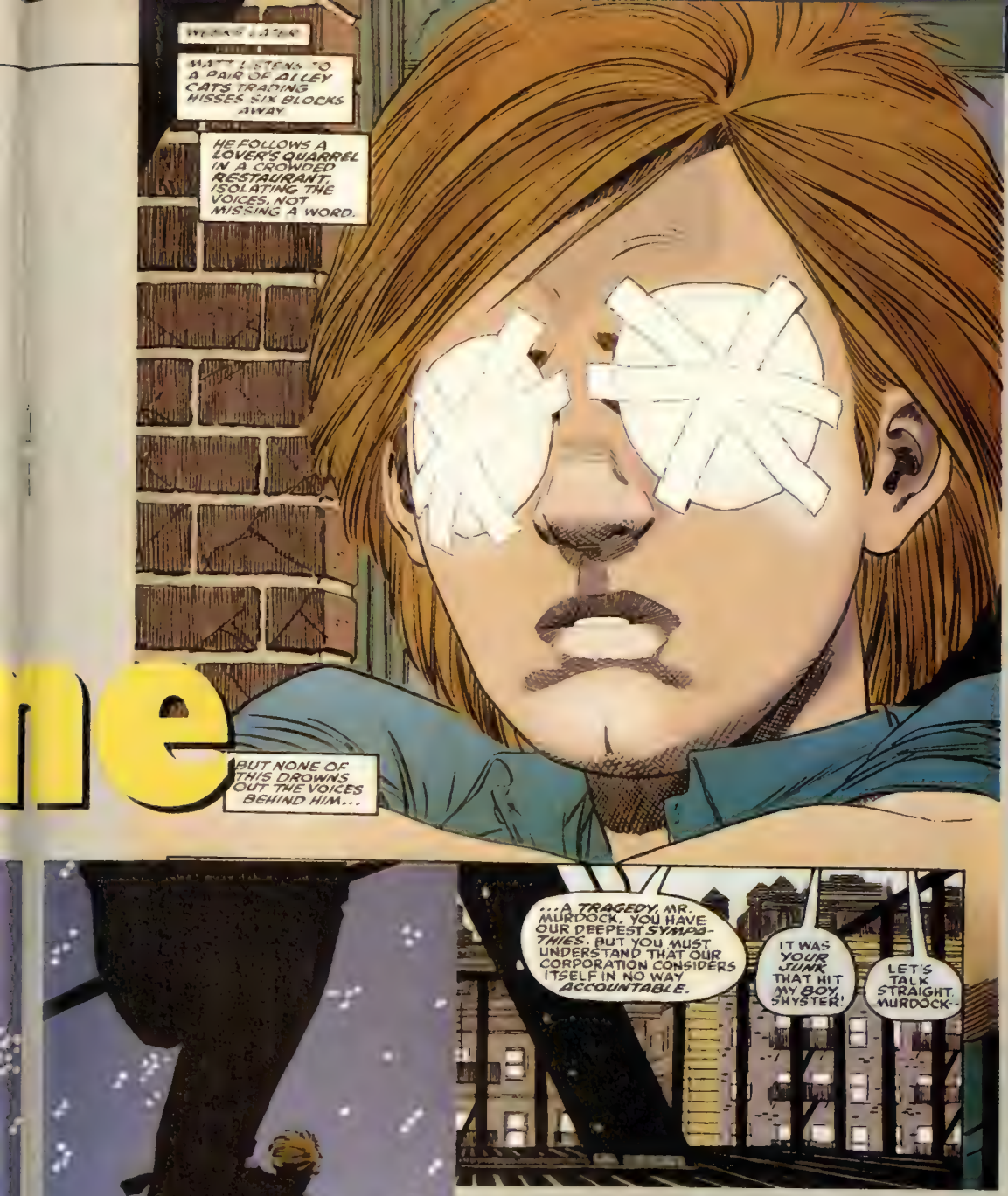
Daredevil's premise was devilishly simple: an acrobatic crimefighter whose dedication to justice could not be served by his job as an attorney alone. As a costumed vigilante he is still devoted to law and order, believing in truth and

After Dark, My Sweet

It's another hot night,
dry and windless.
The kind that makes people
do sweaty secret things.
I wait and I listen...

(A Dame to Kill For)

Daredevil © Marvel Entertainments Group Inc.
RoboCop © Orion Pictures Corporation.
Spawn © Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc.


MATT LISTENS TO A PAIR OF ALLEY CATS TRADING HISSES SIX BLOCKS AWAY.
HE FOLLOWS A LOVER'S QUARREL IN A CROWDED RESTAURANT, ISOLATING THE VOICES, NOT MISSING A WORD.
BUT NONE OF THIS DROWNS OUT THE VOICES BEHIND HIM...

...A TRAGEDY, MR. MURDOCK. YOU HAVE OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES. BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT OUR CORPORATION CONSIDERS ITSELF IN NO WAY ACCOUNTABLE.
IT WAS YOUR JUNK THAT HIT MY BOY, SHYSTER!
LET'S TALK STRAIGHT, MURDOCK.

Daredevil: The Man Without Fear. Art: John Romita Jr.

justice with a passion. He doesn't throw criminals from the rooftops or break their backs - he delivers them to the police. He has never killed anyone.

No?

Frank Miller joined as artist on the book in 1979, and took over as writer/artist ten months later. It was one of the most astute moves Marvel had made in years, Miller proving his worth within a few issues, playing the tricks that most new writers try when they're out to make a good first impression – in Miller's case taking away Matt's radar sense for a few issues - and trying to return to the original concept of Daredevil as a superhero. What he added was a more realistic background and motivation for Matt Murdock to work against: the city of New York was overrun by organised crime, more than enough for Daredevil to fight without needing the safety net of super-villains to tell stories. There were all too many human crimes for the idealistic attorney to battle, and too many manipulating, inhuman characters.

To this Miller added Elektra, one of the most ambiguous love-interests ever seen in comics. Matt's first love, they met at highschool and began an affair which lasted until the death of her father. Matt's father, a boxer, was already dead, killed by a crime lord called the Fixer (you can find the full story of both these events in *Daredevil: Marked for Death* and *The Elektra Saga* if you can't afford the back-issues). Elektra left school with her father's death, and sought peace of spirit with the enlightened warriors of the Far East. Trained in martial combat, she found, not peace, but an outlet for her troubled past. Banished by her mentor, she sought out The Hand, a criminal organisation, her original intentions honourable, to destroy the fraternity from within, but the power and her work as an assassin corrupted her. It makes her an enemy of Daredevil when their paths cross again.

At least, that's what happened until Miller decided to re-write history.

THE SMELL OF FEAR

Daredevil: Man Without Fear is two issues old as I pen this. It was one issue old when I spoke to Frank.

"It all began really when John Romita Jr. called me up and asked me to write him a story. I believe he wanted me to write a Wolverine story, but I wasn't interested in that. I thought doing a Daredevil story would be the best way to go because he was obviously very good at that kind of material."

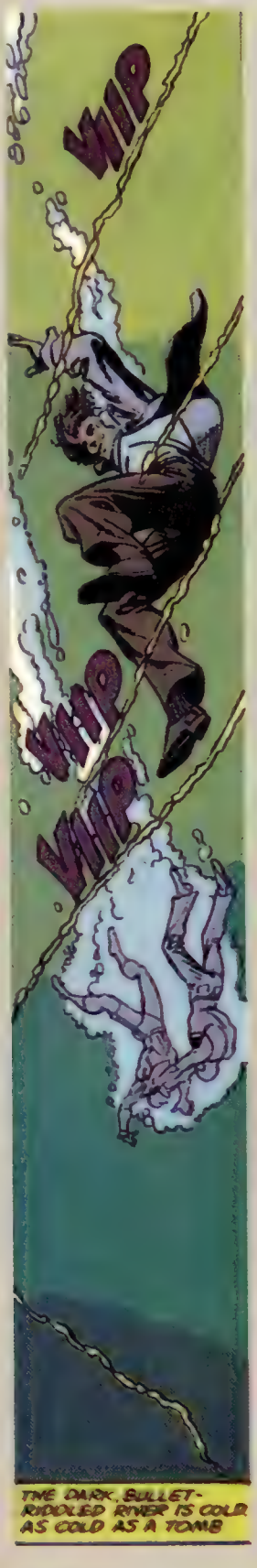
Romita Jr. recalled the origin of the story for us recently: originally conceived as a 64-page graphic novel, the idea grew until the story encompassed not only the origin of Daredevil, but that of Elektra as well and retro-fitted the first 19 years of Matt's life, adding details to his involvement with the Kingpin and other characters. The resulting expansion took the book up to 144 pages, too long for a single one-shot graphic novel, but (thankfully) it broke down naturally into five episodes.

This isn't the first time that Frank has been involved in an origin story - the classic being *Batman: Year One*. However, it is the first time he's come back to the character of the Daredevil for some years. It's like..."Visiting an old friend," he says.

"He's a character I've done so much work on that I've got to know him rather well, and when the opportunity came to do it, I felt that the chance to do him when he was younger would be quite a fun challenge, to try and put together all the various components of the character using some 30 years of often contradictory material as a basis for it. It's set not just at the beginning of his childhood, but carries through to the first time he donned the costume."

"We'll be featuring a lot of characters that Daredevil is associated with, including Elektra, the Kingpin and so on, but these aren't just recountings of old stories: these are brand new scenes, and in some cases they're dramatic changes in the histories of the characters. The most critical change I made to the existing lives is an incident that happens in the second issue which is probably going to make a lot of people hate me. I don't want to go into what it is because I believe it's quite a shock, but it was - to me - the missing piece of the puzzle as far as who Matt Murdock is and

▼ Art: Miller/Janson



what often drives him in such strange directions."

The changes in issue one are subtle - you've probably spotted them yourself - but the beginning of issue two twists the Daredevil legend on its head and sets it spinning. It's a kick in the ribs to the traditionalists, but will they really loath Frank's reasoning behind the justice-obsessed Murdock? I'm more astounded by Elektra. What the hell happened to the rose?

Change for the sake of change? It's something the industry has seemed to be obsessed with for the past few years, not just with Daredevil. Has Frank been following events in *Daredevil*? "I haven't read a thing," he admits. "I don't read the characters that I've been involved with because I know I'd hate it. Whatever writers do, I know I'll just dislike it intensely.

"This is not so much an attempt to put continuity straight - I'm the last person to ask to do that. I'm more of a demolition man! It's more to set the character straight, to put him through the paces so that he makes sense as a cohesive character.

"In this case its quite a journey. *Batman: Year One* was a particularly tight little story that took place in one year, where this one takes place over twenty years. And the characters are so completely different: Batman is really a character you can sum up in one sentence, whereas Daredevil is an amalgam. He's very confused at the beginning and he's more the product of different writers piling on various things over so many years - to bring something cohesive out of that was a particular challenge."

How big a fuss fans are going to make is open to debate, particularly when they are already being subjected to a costume change as Matt suffers his fall from grace in the regular monthly: "we're going to bring Daredevil into the nineties" said Daredevil editor, Ralph Macchio, remembering that pastel colours were out in this years Autumn Collection, and giving Daredevil something in natty red, white and blue.

THEY CAN ONLY HANG YOU ONCE

If Miller has made a number of controversial changes, and he's not giving much away as we talk, it won't be the first time. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* had its critics when it first appeared for its grim redefinition of Batman and the whole Dark Knight mythos, although exactly how this argument quite works when the whole shebang was clearly set in the future...well, let's leave that one to the critics to argue their case. *Hard Boiled* was another title attacked for its gratuitous ultra-violence, a path Miller has followed again subsequently with *Sin City*. There's an argument to the effect that ignoring the actions themselves and seeing violence as a force that shapes the characters justifies its use; a lot of it depends on whether you can distinguish between a story and real life, I guess. When we spoke, I mentioned an earlier Daredevil story which had been shelved by Marvel, originally written for issue #167: 'Child's Play' was refused

approval by the Comics Code Authority. "Remember the Comics Code?"

Miller laughs. "They're sort of like the Soviet parliament: they never quite go away. They refused the story and Marvel did not run it, but the Authority is so confused that we just submitted it again a few months later and it passed through without a change. The only adjustments I made was to tie it in with the work that I was writing at the time because I wasn't the writer of the book originally."

The story, which concerned children and the use of 'angel dust' (Phencyclidine, or PCP), appeared later (and was collected in *Daredevil: Child's Play*), and mention of it touches a nerve, but not because of the ban itself: "It's always a little uncomfortable to have such a swirl of controversy around what I think is one of the most unimpressive stories I've ever been associated with. It's far from my favourite Daredevil story. A little too much of the socially conscientious young man in that one, I think!" He laughs again.

"They didn't pass it because they have these archaic rules that don't really apply much since they were created in 1954. They're really rather an embarrassment, and very little to do with comics these days, although I notice that little sticker on the corner of books coming out of Marvel and DC still.

"One of the reasons why I oppose the notion of a comic book ratings system so vigorously is because you never seem to get rid of these censorious little organisations. I mean, the Comics Code Authority is the laughing stock of the industry but it's still there."

Miller's stand - and that of others - came to a head some years back when DC tried to introduce ratings on their covers, although the controversy fizzled out, along with the idea. "I think it was all a panic about a foe who never showed up. There was fear in the air for a few months and unfortunately DC were ready to give away the farm. Luckily they didn't go through with it, and since then people have realised that rating is not a solution to the problem - and after working in the movies I can tell you it is a hell of a problem."

IRONSIDE

That's my best link into *RoboCop*, so we rap about the movies. *RoboCop 3* is still waiting in the wings over here, but should be out in the States shortly, held over from the summer. However, it has appeared in Japan and Europe already where it has done very well, thank you.

Miller was the perfect choice to script *RoboCop 2*. Paul Verhoeven's original film was a cold-hearted affair without much warmth, Peter Weller playing the tight-lipped cyborg, Murphy, in an effects driven comic-book movie. It was well-received by just about everyone (although the guys who had the rights to Judge Dredd must have been spitting!).

The follow-up had its moments of humour, but was condemned for its relentless violence, from the mugging of a bag lady in the opening seconds to the final dazzling fx finale when RoboCop takes out RoboCop 2. It had all the Miller elements: the giant, heartless corporation, the designer drugs, the guns (it even has Frank in a cameo). The Omni Consumer Corporation's exploitation of the RoboCop programme, creating a second RoboCop, and its takeover of the city of Detroit, foreclosing on loans made to the city, was the background: what Miller gave RoboCop was an exploration of the cyborg's human side, only half-explored by the time the film had been through a re-write and shooting. Murphy

▲ RoboCop versus Terminator. Art: Walter Simonson.
◀ Early John Romita Jr. Daredevil, from Marked For Death.

left the movie as confused as the audience as to whether he was a human in a cyborg suit, or a suit with borrowed memories.

The third film, helmed by Fred Dekker, also went through a rewrite which reintroduced some of the elements from the previous film. "What happened," says Frank, "was that I wrote a first draft for *RoboCop 3*, and the studio decided that they wanted it to be a more family orientated film. I suggested that maybe I wasn't the best person to rewrite it. So the director, Fred Dekker, took over the writing and went through the original *RoboCop 2*. He found some things that he just loved, which I had always been in love with, and pulped them together along with what I'd written for *RoboCop 3* to produce his version of the script. He then invited me back to do a re-write; we bounced it back and forth a few times and

he went off and shot it. It was a very pleasant working relationship."

One of the elements rediscovered by Dekker, and a must for family viewing, was a kid for the kids to empathise with. *RoboCop 2* hadn't done the domestic business Orion had hoped (although it was a smash hit everywhere else), hence the fear that Miller's script was too dark. Dekker took a Japanese computer whiz kid, Keiko, which had been jettisoned from the very first draft of *RoboCop 2*,

and introduced her as the antithesis of the unflinching, humourless robot. It's an element which seems to have gone down well with audiences outside of America who are still waiting to see what happens - as is Frank:

"I can't really comment on the final film because I haven't seen it," he admits. "I saw one cut of it which I thought had some really lovely touches. I'd love to tell you how wonderful it is, but I simply don't know yet." There's honesty for you. "What I saw I enjoyed," he adds.

"It's funny. It was filmed in Atlanta, so you've had three movies that are supposed to be set in Detroit, two of which were filmed in Texas, and one in Georgia."

▲ *James, a 'big, stupid, emotional cyborg'.*

NOTHING MORE THAN MURDER

If *RoboCop 2* was unpretentious movie entertainment - and made a damn fine job of being just that - then what could be said for *RoboCop versus Terminator*, a head-on crash of a comic?

"It's not simply a great big fight scene, although it certainly fills the bill on that," laughs Miller. "I lobbied for it to be called *RoboCop versus Terminator* from the beginning because I didn't want to be pretending that I was doing anything of great, lasting importance. And it was a chance to work with Walt Simonson. We've always wanted to work together - he's an artist I admire tremendously - and knowing I was working with Walter I knew that it was a good chance to go wild because he has a wild sense of humour and a wonderful sense of spectacle.

"I thought *This will be fun. I get to work with Walter and it'll be a chance to do a story for a younger crowd than I've been doing lately*, so I agreed to do it, and all of a sudden, in a moment of horror, I realised I'd have to do a time travel story. Now, I don't like time-travel stories, and I intended never to write one, but I was stuck. I finally decided to take time-travel to the point of utter absurdity where everything that happens in the story unhappens right and left. I think the final result is pretty entertaining." Entertaining *and* pretty, in fact.

▲ *Spawn meets Boomer.*

PICK-UP

Another recent assignment was *Spawn*, one of the four critic's choice writers series. "You'd be surprised at how many projects come from somebody just making a phonecall. Todd, who I barely knew at the time, called me up and asked if I'd write him an issue, and I asked him to send me some of his comics because I'd never seen any of them, and he sent me a whole parcel."

You see? Pick up the phone and call Frank and he'll write you a story. Phone Todd and he'll send you a parcel of comics. Isn't the comic industry wonderful, folks.

THE BIG KNOCKOVER

Maybe it's not quite that simple. In fact Miller and McFarlane seem like two ends of the same four-colour rainbow. So what was the attraction?

"I thought that the level of enthusiasm, the sheer labour of those pages, showed Todd to be quite serious about his comics. So I wrote him an issue of *Spawn* and it was a lot of fun, and Todd excelled himself. He brings a lot of energy to his work. I found his sensibility one I could play to with great pleasure: it was fun working with Todd.

"If I were of the age that *Spawn* seems to be aimed at, it would almost certainly be my favourite comic book. I don't think a lot of people understand how much of the series has been very intentionally funny. I guess because its so heavy on the blacks and there are all the chains and everything, people expect it to be tremendously grim, but when I had an issue to write, I just though that I was writing a comedy because that was the part of what Todd was doing that I could relate to best. The big, stupid, emotional cyborgs.

"It's a disgustingly violent comic. But I like that too."

In Part Two: All those important questions answered: Who are The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot? What happens when Marsha Washington Goes to War? What's the best way to kill Daredevil? And just how tall is Geof Darrow?

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VENDETTA IN GOTHAM

"LANCE RICKMAN WITNESSES THE REMATCH OF THE YEAR"

One of 1991's most popular comics came about when America's DC Comics and Britain's Fleetway Publications brought together two of the most remorseless crime-fighters in the history of the comics: The Batman, Gotham City's Dark Knight and Judge Dredd, Mega-City One's toughest and least flexible cop. In the 64-page one-shot special, **Judgement On Gotham,** ***the lawman and the vigilante tangled with each other, Judge Anderson, The Scarecrow and Judge Death, but the book's success was in no small part due to its fan-favourite creative team. Writers John Wagner (co-creator of Dredd) and Alan Grant shared between them many years of experience on both Judge Dredd and Batman, while artist Simon Bisley (Lobo, Slaine) was at the peak of his popularity and fame. Released simultaneously in DC's deluxe bookshelf format and as an oversized Fleetway album, the team-up proved a tremendous hit in Britain and in the States, where it ranked among the highest-grossing comics of the year.***

The project's success and the American public's reaction to Judge Dredd helped to pave the way for a recent trans-Atlantic agreement, whereby the Mega-City lawman has been franchised to DC to appear in all-new, U.S.-created stories. Furthermore, the long-awaited **Judge Dredd** ***live-action movie is about to begin production, written by William*** **(Terminator 2)** ***Wisher and produced by Disney's Hollywood Pictures. What better time to release a second Dredd/Batman team-up?***

"The story which John and I originally wrote as *Judgement On Gotham II* was to be painted by Glenn Fabry," explains co-writer Alan Grant, "but it was going to take a long time and the publishers were afraid it would lose momentum by the time he had finished. So John and I suggested that we write a new *Judgement II* to take place in between, and Glenn's would become *Judgement On Gotham III*."

At DC editor Denny O'Neil's suggestion, Scottish artist Cam Kennedy was approached to draw the new sequel. Kennedy had collaborated several times with both writers, *Lobo* and *Nick Fury: Agent Of Shield* with Grant, *Batman* with Wagner, and Judge Dredd and *Outcasts*,

A LITTLE HEAVY ON THE BIKE CANNON, MAYBE--BUT YOU CAN TAKE A FEW KNOCKS, CAN'T YOU, PAL?!
AHHH!
ZONK!
LIKEWISE, I'M SURE!
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU ONE CHANCE TO EXPLAIN, "PAL". WHY DID YOU TRY TO KILL ME?
IF I'D WANTED TO KILL YOU, YOU'D ALREADY BE IN THE MORGUE!
JUST CALL IT MY WAY OF SAYING PULL OVER!
OOOOM!

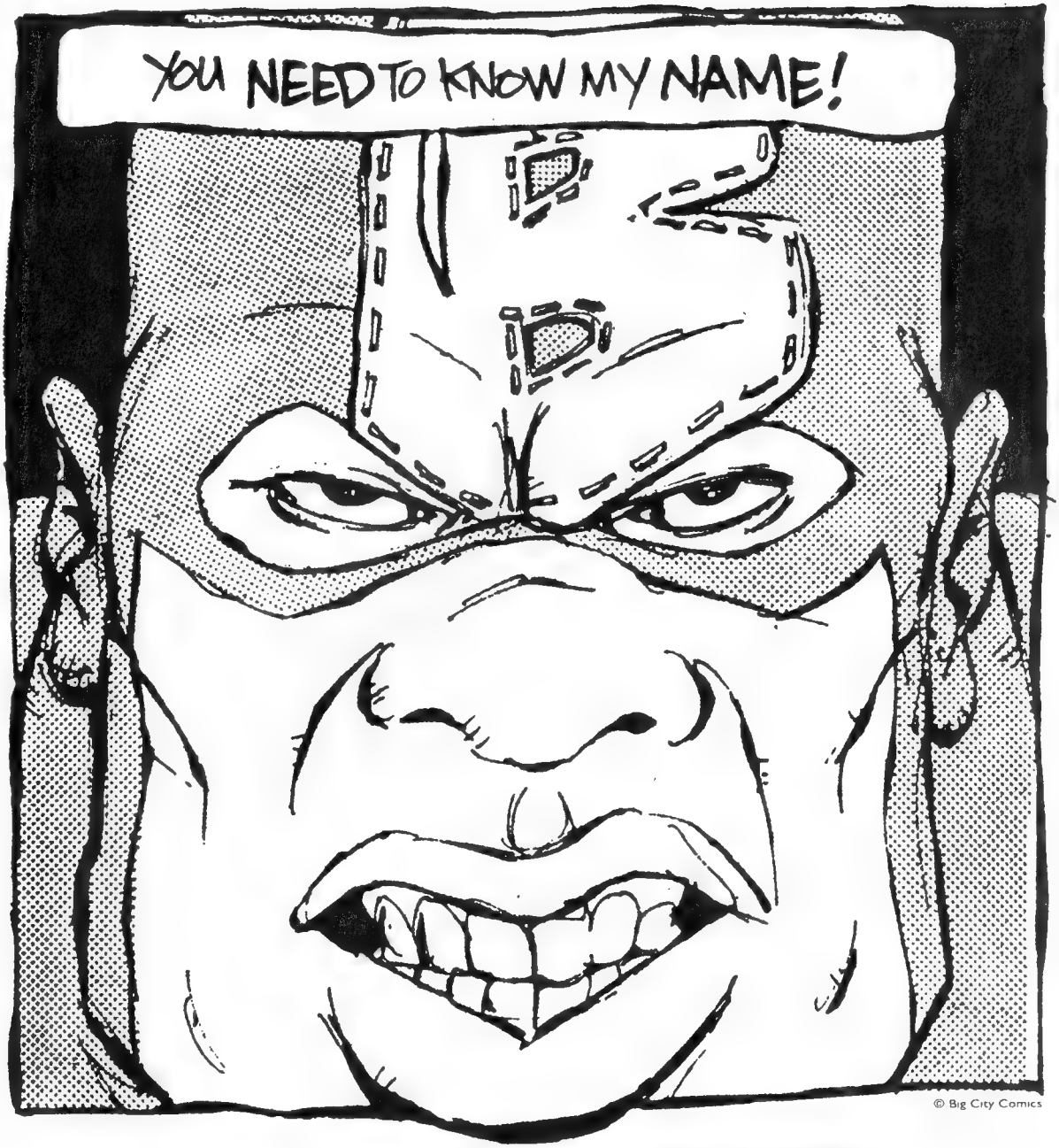
This long-awaited re-match is the main point of the story, according to Grant. "Basically, it's a long fight between Dredd and Batman," he says. "We didn't think that the original's action sequence between the two of them did either of them justice, and this is the fight we felt we should have had in the first *Judgement On Gotham*, but didn't have the space. So this time we decided to keep it simple: Judge Dredd turns up in Gotham City and starts to hammer the shit out of Batman, saying that he has a score to settle with him from the first encounter. We threw in The Ventriloquist and Scarface, up to some nefarious business, as a sub-plot but, of course, the different elements come together at the end and you understand what it was all about. I hope."

Cam Kennedy has inked his own pencils on the book, but it will be computer-colored at the Digital Chameleon studios. The cover is by Mike Mignola ("He doesn't do covers anymore, but I hoped he might make an exception, as he did with my Lobo issues," says Kennedy). The bookshelf-format DC issue will be published on November 14th, and the larger Fleetway UK edition three days later. Were the creators expecting another big seller?

"Strange as it may sound, I don't think in those terms, except very generally," says Grant. "I didn't expect the first *Judgement* to be a big seller, that certainly wasn't why we wrote it. If this

the team's first DC comics mini-series, with both. Kennedy, currently based in Oregon, where he is painting the sequel to Dark Horse's *Star Wars: Dark Empire*, recalls an unexpected hitch in the artwork.

"They sent me photocopies of Simon Bisley's version of the Batmobile," he says. "I couldn't make anything out, it was so dark, so I drew the Batmobile as it was in the movie. But apparently DC are not allowed to use that version, and I had to re-draw it, and change the front, which is very distinctive. Also, while I enjoyed working on Batman, I was careful to try to give Dredd and Batman equal attention. If I gave Dredd all the best shots, all the best poses, I'd upset the Batman fans, and if I favoured Batman, the Dredd fans wouldn't like it. There's quite a long fight-scene, including one page with twelve or fourteen silhouettes of Batman and Dredd fighting – just Alan and John's way of getting an extra four pages of fight into it, I think – even that will be scrutinised by people to see who's getting the worst of it. Even there I had to be as fair as I could."



BROTHER MAN

DICTATOR OF DISCIPLINE

GOSH!

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one sells a lot I'll be happy, but if it doesn't – well, I'll earn less money, but it doesn't mean that the story is any less good. I hope it does quite well; Cam certainly has quite a following, and his *Star Wars* work earned him a lot of kudos."

JUDGEMENT IV?

Several familiar characters will appear in *Judgement On Gotham III*, including the four Dark Judges and The Joker ("Yes, we do exploit the resemblance between The Joker and Judge Death," says Grant). The story is fully painted by Glenn Fabry (see issue 20 for a full interview), and will be released, this time, as a two-volume set. But are further Dredd/Batman adventures planned?

"Nothing has been finalised at the moment, but if we did do a fourth, we would want to choose an entirely different angle," says Grant. "When John and I first sat down to work on a Judge Dredd/Batman cross-over, the thing that immediately came up was that it was a clash between Law and Justice. In the first book, illustrated by Simon Bisley, we had too many characters and only 64 pages; we didn't have space to go into either the physical fight between Dredd and Batman or the conflict between Law and Justice. In this second cross-over, *Vendetta In Gotham*, Judge Dredd lays his badge aside, because he figures they have unfinished business. It's personal, he owes Batman a hammering. With the third meeting, painted by Glenn Fabry, we have again avoided the real issue, because Dredd and Batman have to team up to battle the Joker and the Dark Judges. If we were to write a *Judgement On Gotham IV*, that's what the main theme would have to be: Law vs. Justice."

"As long as the characters involved are kept as they are meant to be, I have no problems with company cross-overs," says Grant. It is known that Marvel and DC have met to talk about resuming character crossovers in the near future and, in fact, Grant and Norm Breyfogle proposed a Batman/Wolverine project some years ago. Although agreed in principal by editors Denny O'Neil and Tom DeFalco, other obstacles always seemed to block the project: "It was like fighting your way through a jelly," says Grant. But in the matter of other Fleetway-DC collaborations, he is enthusiastic. "I'd like to do a Lobo and Mean Machine book, although we'll have to wait until Dredd is established in the States. And I'd kinda like to do a Batman/Judge Anderson story, because I think they could play quite well off each other." CW

Batman © *DC Comics*
Judge Dredd © *Fleetway Editions*

ALAN GRANT ON THE JUDGE DREDD MOVE

"On their terms, they will probably make a pretty good action thriller, but I doubt that it'll be done the way that readers of *2000AD* and the *Megazine* would wish. In an ideal world, Dredd would have been done as a Japanese animated Manga movie, something like *Akira* which creates a setting realistically, without requiring a gigantic budget. The recreation of Mega-City One and everything that goes with it could prove too complex and expensive for them to do it well."

What Does Grant think about the casting of Sylvester Stallone in the lead role?

"I have no ideal casting in mind, but I think – and John Wagner would admit this happily – that Judge Dredd grew out of Clint Eastwood playing the part of Dirty Harry. At one time, Eastwood could have made the perfect Dredd, although an unfamiliar actor would probably work better in the role; the fact that they've cast Sylvester Stallone in the lead of the Dredd movie means that, for the millions of Stallone fans throughout the world, it's just going to be another Stallone picture. In one picture he's a mountain-climber, another he's a boxer, another picture he's a policeman of the future; but we always know what he looks like. I don't want to know what Judge Dredd looks like, I don't want to see him with the helmet off. I want to keep that little bit of mystery. Now, that may be the way to gain a cult following in a comic, but I'm sure it's not a commercial thing to do in a movie, and because it's a Stallone movie, Stallone's face will probably have to be seen.

"If the film hits, there'll be a *Judge Dredd 2* and *3*, and if it doesn't – well, it'll just sink into obscurity. I would love to see it done true to the way that John Wagner and I used to write it, but it's the last thing I expect. Publishing companies, at least large ones, prostitute their properties regularly – but that's what they're in the business of doing. I'm sure that, from Fleetway's, and the movie company's point of view, all they want to do is make a lot of money. They don't give a shit whether they remain true to the character or not. If Fleetway thought they could make millions by sticking Judge Dredd in a ballet dancer's tutu with daisies up his arse, they would quite happily do it.

"Complaints about the Dredd movie are much more likely to come from a small band of loyal purists, people who have followed Judge Dredd from the beginning and for whom Dredd means something. They see Judge Dredd in a particular way. When they see it changed on the big screen, they're obviously going to be very unhappy about it, and I'm one of this band of purists. I'm one of those who was unhappy about the Batman movies, just because Michael Keaton was such an unconvincing Batman – a great Bruce Wayne, but an unconvincing Batman. There are so many people who want to interfere in the creative process, particularly in television and movies, that at the end of the day, you often end up with a product which has no coherence or credibility."

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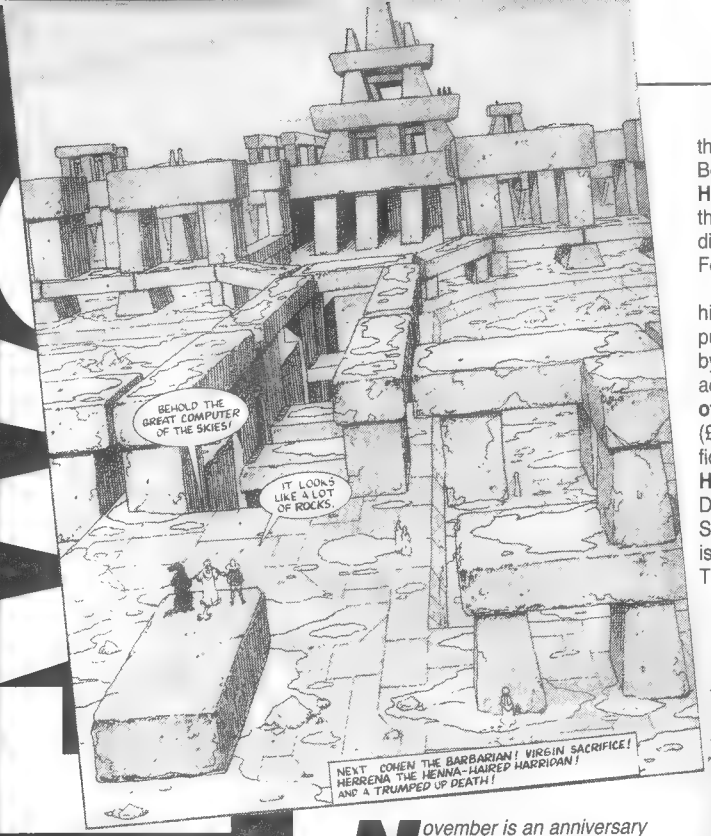
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IT LOOKS LIKE A LOT OF ROCKS.
NEXT, COHEN THE BARBARIAN! VIRGIN SACRIFICE! HERRENA THE HENNA-HAIRED HARRIDAN! AND A TRUMPED UP DEATH!

November is an anniversary for Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, the first novel, The Colour of Magic, *appearing 10 years ago, celebrated by the release of this month's biggie,* ***Men At Arms*** *(Gollancz, £14.99), the latest hardcover Discworld novel. Now, I know Discworld has its fans and its critics, but nobody can deny that Pratchett and his flat, turtle-borne world was the success story of the 1980s. The settings for stories were ingenious, the writing sparkling even if the jokes were hit or miss depending on your humour. In* Men At Arms *we return to Ankh-Morpork and the City Watch of* Guards! Guards!, *with Captain Vimes, about to retire, Corporal Carrot (the too-tall dwarf), Lance-constable Detritus, the troll, and more members of Vimes' team. If you liked* Guards! Guards! *(and I remember it as one of the best in the series), you'll love* Men At Arms.

Corgi are also celebrating with the paperbacked **Lords and Ladies** (£4.99) and a series of audio cassettes relating the first three novels (*Colour of Magic*, *The Light Fantastic* and *Equal Rites*), all priced £7.99. **The Light Fantastic** gets the graphic novel treatment (reprinting the Innovation series from 1992), priced £7.99, and Stephen Briggs has produced a detailed map of Discworld's capital in **The Streets of Ankh-Morpork** (£4.99).

Bantam have the latest in the long-running Pern series by Anne McCaffrey, **Chronicles of Pern** (£14.99) proving that dragon's still sell even in these dinosaur-crazy times. This one includes five stories set throughout Pern's history, from the first discovery of the planet through tales of Fort Weyr, dragons and dragonriders. For McCaffrey's many fans, there's also **Crystal Line** (Corgi, £4.99), the latest Crystal Singer's novel, follows Killshandra and Lars Dahl as they explore a strange manifestation on the distant world of Opal.

Boxtree have two *Star Wars* ties, the 'Lost Jedi Adventure Games Books', **Jedi Dawn** and **The Bounty Hunter**, role playing books based on the adventures of Havet Storm, who discovers he has the power of the Force (both £3.99).

Doctor Who fans can celebrate his 30th anniversary with the publication of **The Dimension Riders** by Daniel Blythe (£4.50), a new adventure, plus a reprint of **Invasion of the Dinosaurs** by Malcolm Hulke (£3.50). There's an excellent non-fiction Who book, the **Doctor Who Handbook: The Sixth Doctor** by David J. Howe, Mark Stammers & Stephen James Walker (£4.50) which is a must for any fans of the Hartnell/ Troughton years.

The Opoponax Invasion by John Brosnan (Gollancz, tpb, £8.99) is set in 2248, where Rooster Jack is out to beat the electronically wired-up world he lives in, a virtual thief who can manipulate any computer; but in pulling his latest, most audacious heist he accidentally reveals an Achilles Heel to his enemies, and sparks off an alien invasion.

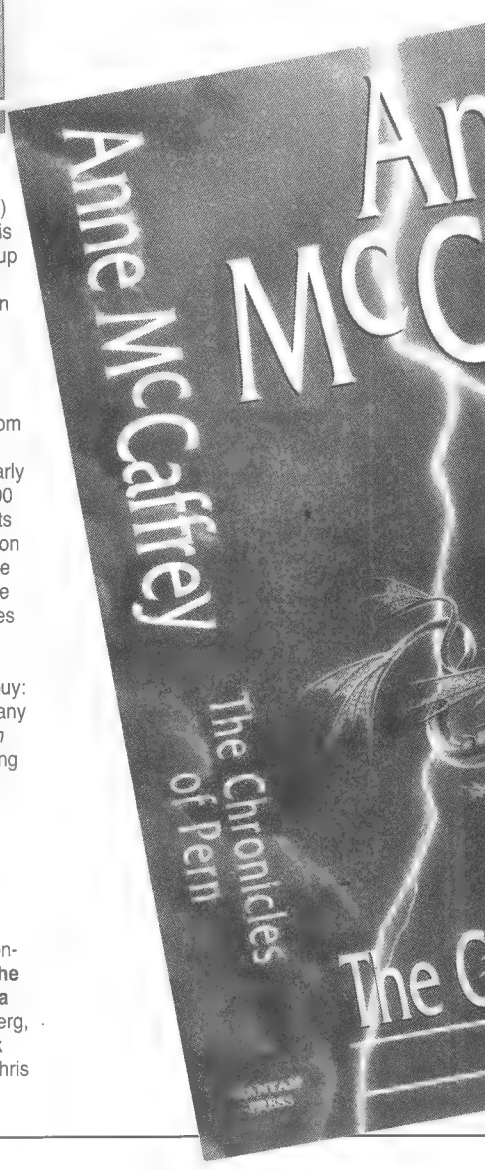
Slightly off the beaten track, from Hamlyn is the 1994 edition of the **Variety Movie Guide** (£12.99), nearly 900 pages of reviews taking in 6,500 films. It's one of the best books of its kind, giving enough credit information for die-hard fans, and enough space to explain its reviews rather than the one or two lines available in volumes which try to cover every film ever made. This is one of the few indispensable film books you can buy: it's not too costly and it includes many of the summer releases (such as *In the Line of Fire*) which will be coming out on video in the next couple of months.

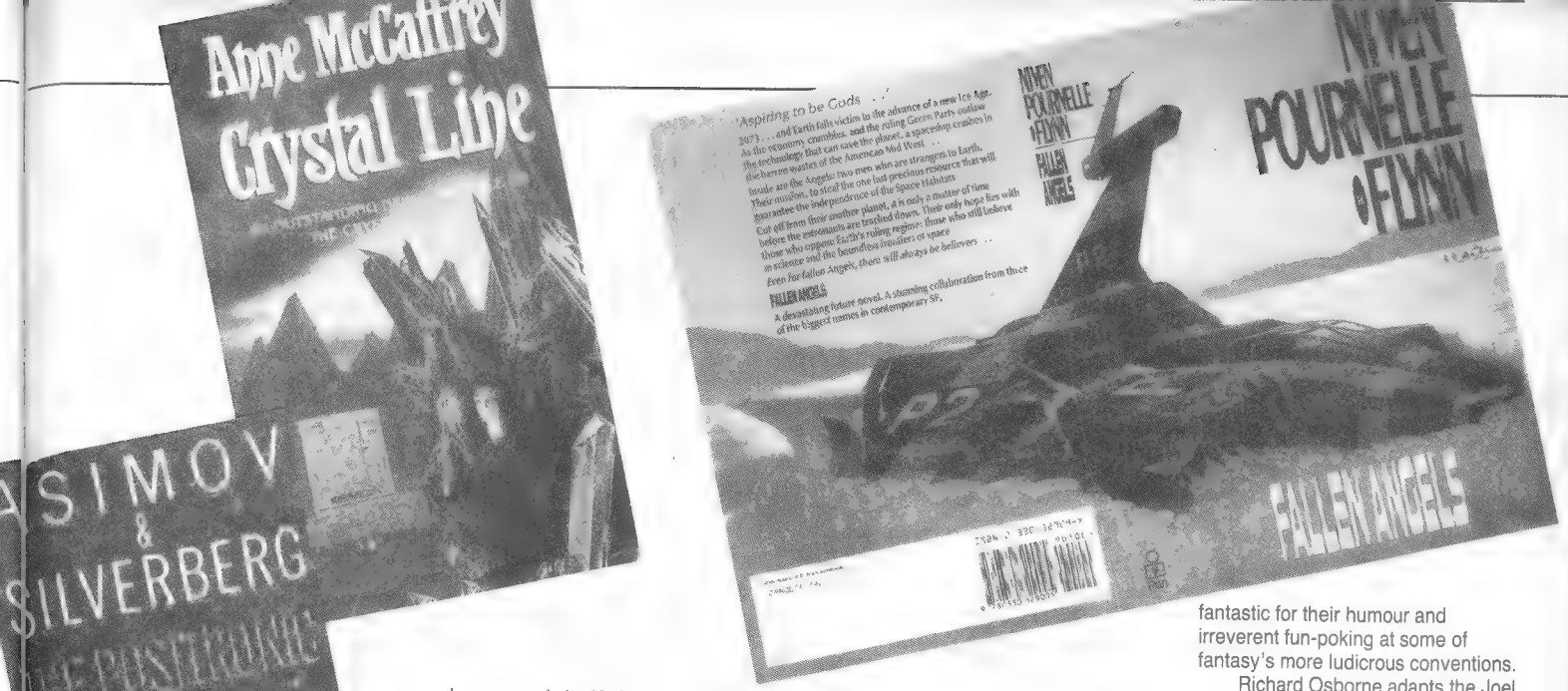
HarperCollins/Grafton have a lengthy list of releases this month which include **The Vanishment** by Jonathan Aycliffe, **The Gap into Madness** by Stephen Donaldson, **James Herbert's Dark Places**, non-fiction by James Herbert, **Mining the Oort** by Frederik Pohl, **Thebes of a Hundred Gates** by Robert Silverberg, all in hardcover, plus **My Star Trek Memories** by William Shatner & Chris Kreski, a non-fiction trade paperback; in paperback there's **Cloven Hooves** by Megan Lindholm, **Timelike Infinity** by Stephen Baxter, **The Gap into Power: A Dark and Hungry God Arises** by Stephen Donaldson, and **Frost Dancers**, an anthropomorphilogical tale of hares by Garry Kilworth.

Another lengthy list (just before the Christmas season, you see) from Headline who have Dan Simmons **Lovedeath**, a new Tanith Lee collection, **Nightshades**, and **Flowerdust** by Gwyneth Jones, all in hardcover, plus **Horror for Christmas** edited by Richard Dalby in trade paperback. **Divine Endurance** by Gwyneth Jones and **Elephantasm** by Tanith Lee receive the softcover treatment.

November titles from Legend include two from Greg Bear, **Moving Wars** (£9.99 tpb, £15.99 hc) and **The Venging** (£4.99). There's also two from Tad Williams: **The Dragonbone Chair** and **Stone of Farewell**, both in hardcover (£15.99).

Millenium are releasing Steve Perry's **Aliens: Earth Hive**, based on the Dark Horse series, and should be reprinting the whole series which has been around in the USA for some time. They also have **Fission Impossible** by Phil Janes in hardcover, **Bad Brains** and **Skin**, two





horror novels by Kathe Koja and the collected **Earl Aubec** stories of Michael Moorcock.

Chiller by Sterling Blake is new from New English Library, priced £4.99, complete with the seal of approval of Dean R. Koontz, plus there's the vampiric horror novel, **Guilty Pleasures** by Laurell K. Hamilton (£4.99).

L. Ron Hubbard's classic fantasy/horror story **Fear** will be released in paperback by New Era. Pre-Scientology, this was first published in 1940 and still stands up today as a taut thriller.

Orbit paperbacks for November are Alan Dean Foster's **Son of Spellsinger**, William James' **Before the Sun Falls** and Robert Jordan's **The Fires of Heaven**.

Thomas Monteleone has written a cracking horror novel in the shape of **The Blood of the Lamb**, which is published by Orion.

Pan titles are **The Positronic Man**, the final posthumous collaboration by Asimov & Silverberg (£4.99), based on Asimov's robots; **Fallen Angels** by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Michael Flynn (tpb original, £8.99), is set in a future Ice Age where the technology which might help mankind is banned; two strangers from the Space Habitats seek out the people who oppose Earth's ruling regime; and in **In the Country of the Blind**, Michael Flynn first solo novel (£4.99), he postulates what might have happened if Charles Babbage had invented a mechanical computer in the 19th century and how it might have been used to predict and control world events.

21st Century Visions (Paper Tiger, £12.95) is a softback written by Oscar-winning special effects wizard, Derek Meddings, whose credits in recent years have included James Bond, Superman, and Batman movies. But long before that he was the effects man for Gerry Anderson, working on *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds* and *Captain Scarlet*. The book describes how the Meddings team created the models and backgrounds and includes plenty of previously unseen shots of the effects team in action and pre-production sketches. Highly recommended to Anderson fans and the nostalgic.

Also from Paper Tiger are two huge portfolios, **The 2nd Rodney Matthews Portfolio** and **The Josh Kirby Diskworld Portfolio** (both priced £10.95). Both contain 28 colour plates which are large enough to turn into posters, if you want, but the high production values of these collections will put you off splitting the artwork. Matthews is the more serious fantasist, his work ranging from Thin Lizzy record sleeves to posters and book covers, but Kirby's are no less fantastic for their humour and irreverent fun-poking at some of fantasy's more ludicrous conventions.

Richard Osborne adapts the Joel Silver produced SF movie, **Demolition Man** (£4.99) starring Sylvester Stallone and Wesley Snipes. The movie is big-budget action, which doesn't always translate into novel form, but this one seems a fair crack at the whip. Bram Stoker's **Dracula** is released on audio cassette by Penguin Audiobooks on 4 Nov, read by Richard E. Grant, and, speaking of films, Penguin have just released a new edition of **The Time Out Film Guide** (£12.00), a 950-page brick covering 10,000 films. It has some excellent appendices including indexes to actors' and directors' films, but dipping into the main text I found many of the reviews to be entertaining but incredibly negative. Maybe I just like films that are generally regarded badly...

Pocket UK release **Star Trek: Best Destiny** by Diane Carey and **Star Trek Deep Space Nine: The Big Game** by Sandy Schofield, no doubt to tumultuous applause from Trekkies everywhere.

Noctuary by Thomas Ligotti is a hardcover collection from Robinson. If you've not read Ligotti's short stories you may wish to approach with caution, but once you can cope with the man's incredible and weird imagination it pays back in spades.

Simon & Schuster have **The Incredibly Strange Film Book** (£9.99) by comic fan and comic shop owner Jonathan Ross, an alternative history of cinema from low-budget monsters to the rise of porno flicks.

Titan have just released **Footrot Flats #5**, a collection of Murray Ball's *Today* newspaper strip. It's a hilarious Dog's-eye-view of farming life in New Zealand, and at £2.99 it's a steal. There's also another Star Trek novel, **The Price of the Phoenix** by Sondra Marshak & Myrna Culbreath, priced £3.99, in which Kirk and his crew investigate a conference held near the Romulan neutral zone, and Spock has to take control of the Enterprise when James T. tries to save a woman and child from being burned alive, and before you can say "it's worse than that. He's dead, Jim" he's dead. It's swift moving and a good one for fans of Spock, who takes centre stage.

Dave McLoughlin

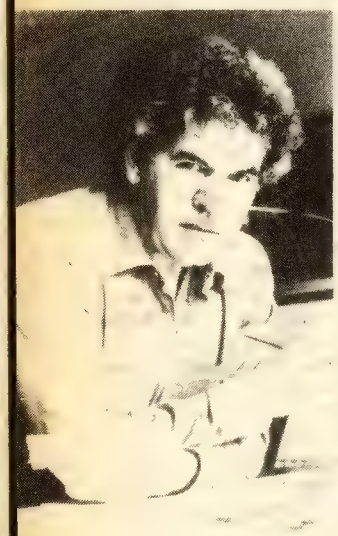


Photo: Martin Baxendale

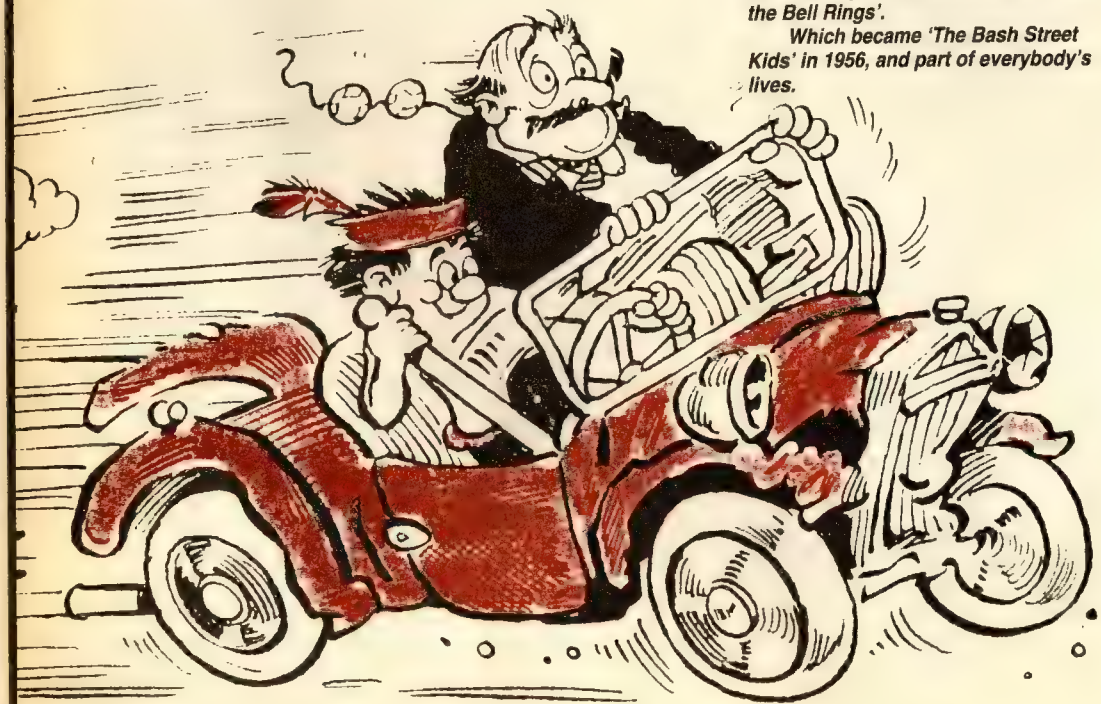
Beware of the Kid

FOR 40 YEARS THE KIDS OF BASH STREET SCHOOL HAVE RUN RIOT IN THE PAGES OF THE BEANO. ALONG WITH LITTLE PLUM AND MINNIE THE MINX, THE KIDS WERE THE CREATION OF LEO BAXENDALE, PART OF THE REVOLUTION THAT HIT BRITISH COMICS IN 1953, NOW BEING CELEBRATED WITH A MAJOR TOURING EXHIBITION. WE SPOKE TO LEO ON THE EVE OF THE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS.

When 'Minnie the Minx Meets the Bash Street Kids' opened at the Harris Museum in Preston on October 21, it was a homecoming for their creator, Leo Baxendale. Although born in nearby Whittle-le-Woods, Leo lived in Preston and created the Bash Street Kids there during a walk down Fishergate. The date was October the 20th, 1953, and Baxendale was 22 years old, already established at The Beano *as the artist of 'Little Plum' - everybody's redskin chum - and 'Minnie the Minx', the stripy-topped female Dennis the Menace. The act of creation can sometimes sound easy in retrospect: "By the time I got to the other end of Fishergate I'd thought the entire thing up, and started drawing it that night," says Leo of the very first Bash Street set.*

He was still drawing the first set on the train taking him to meet George Moonie, the Beano *editor, at D.C. Thomson's Manchester office. It had been Moonie's suggestion that Leo draw a third feature for* Beano, *then deep in the throws of a humour and adventure revolution: 1953 had already seen the arrival of Plum, Minnie and 'Roger the Dodger' by newcomer Ken Reid; Alfie 'Jumbo' Johnson saved the life of Professor Carter, and was rewarded with a miniature mechanical Army in the first General Jumbo adventure penned by one of Thomson's top adventure artist, Paddy Brennan. All in all it was a vintage year, and behind the scenes Moonie and Baxendale were plotting the next step. The outline of the idea was for a whole group of children, all spilling out of school. Two frames to set up a situation and one large frame packed with jokes, frenetic visuals and anarchy. The title would be 'When the Bell Rings'.*

Which became 'The Bash Street Kids' in 1956, and part of everybody's lives.



When Baxendale retired from drawing 'I Love You Baby Basil' for the *Guardian* in 1992, it wasn't an easy decision he was being forced to make. "I had to call an abrupt halt because my eyes were completely out of focus at the end of each days drawing," he says. "I did quite well to keep it going for two years because I hadn't drawn for two-and-a-half years and had no intention of drawing again at all. I'd actually gone into the *Guardian* to have a drink with someone, and was shanghaied by the editor and asked to do something. I dithered about it because I'd also been asked by the editor of the *Sunday Times* to do something for her, and also I'd been talking to John Brown about starting a new comic for them. All in the same week!

"I thought I'd have to make a choice because the years were passing by. I was 59 at the time, and I plumped for the *Guardian* because I thought one little single bank of strip wouldn't tax me, but in fact it took absolutely ages to do each week because I was working with both drawing glasses and a hand lens for the whole two years. In the end I just had to stop.

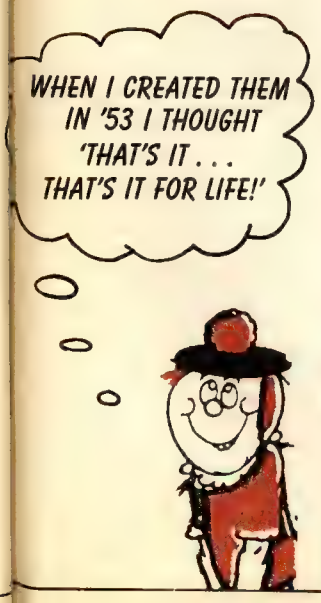
"When you think of how many pages I turned out each week for *The Beano* in the fifties, and it took me all week to do this tiny little bank of 'Baby Basil'...but I really enjoyed doing it because I had complete freedom to do whatever I liked."

Freedom is something Baxendale has always enjoyed in his work, and he's one of the few artists in Britain - with maybe David Law and Ken Reid - who can honestly have been said to have advanced the traditional British humour strip in the past fifty years. That's not to deny the technical skill of artists before and after his work appeared, but his often violent, anarchic, marmalising kids - and some subtle and thought provoking serio-comedy strips in later life - have argued Leo's case for humour more powerfully than any number of psychological studies. That he's serious about his fun, and has the artistic skill and credentials to back up his arguments, can be seen in his autobiography, *A Very Funny Business* (published by Duckworth, but sadly out of print unless you write to them and demand a reprint), his study of humour, *On Comedy*, and the stripography at the end of this feature.

That very first 'When the Bell Rings' included recognisable Bash Street kids, Danny and Toots, and even the Bash Street School janitor. Other characters arrived over the next few weeks, Plug, Fatty, Smiffy, Wilfred...by 1955 they were also appearing on the cover of *Wizard* to accompany text stories about the school, and Leo was drawing 'The Banana Bunch' for *Beezer*, and would later create 'The Three Bears', and draw fill-in strips for his hero David Law on 'Dennis the Menace'. The increasing work load, which also included strips for annuals, endpapers and other fill-in work when other artists fell behind schedule, eventually took its toll.

Despite the workload, Leo packed in as much detail as he could and made sure that the characters lived on in the minds of his readers long after they'd reached the last page of that week's Fun Factory offering, and still do even though Leo stopped drawing them in 1962. "I suppose at the back of my mind I must have expected they would outlive me because I used to talk to the *Beano* staff at the time, and say I would retire when I was 50 or 55. And I did make Plum, Minnie and Bash Street to last for decades. I mean, when I created them in '53 I thought *That's it...That's it for life!*

"I was 22 when I created Minnie and Bash Street, and I must have been aware by then that comic characters have a tremendous longevity. The three of us - myself, my wife and Martin, our youngest son - made a video film that will play at the exhibition and go on tour with us.



We've selected the images for the film, and deal very intimately with the pictures, individual frames that I did in the '50s, and sometimes I think to myself, *God, fancy me drawing that!* It seems unreal. Did I really manage to do that?

"One of the images on the film is a single frame - Plum with hundreds and hundreds of bears leering at the camera. I took a copy of the video to Preston a couple of weeks ago and Bryan Talbot, Trina Robbins and Steve Leialoha were watching the film with me, and when we came to that particular image I heard Bryan - there was a sharp intake of breath - and I was thinking *How did I manage to do that?* I wouldn't like to start on doing that now.

"Certainly it wasn't just me. The late Ken Reid with Jonah and even David Law with Dennis until he got absolutely worn out - we poured our life's blood into it. I know that artists still do now: I've been watching Bryan work on his *Bad Rat* book and its an incredible piece of work.

"I think that, dealing with comedy as we did in *The Beano*, you can go right over the top. There was a complete lack of inhibition and some of the things we did were completely irrational. All the time, when I look at these set pieces we were doing, I knew full-well there wasn't time to do them. Intellectually I knew that, and if I'd been a totally logical being I wouldn't have done them. But the fact is, I did!"

Ten years of tremendous output for relatively little reward left Leo suffering from exhaustion and depression, and after contracting pneumonia he left Thomsons, having been invited by Odhams Press to create a new humour title; this he did, and *Wham!* appeared in 1964 with a whole army of new Baxendale creations from 'General Nit and his Barmy Army', 'Georgie's Germs' and 'The Tiddlers' to 'Biff' and the full-colour double-page 'Eagle-Eye, Junior Spy'. Most of the strips were passed on to other artists to continue after the first

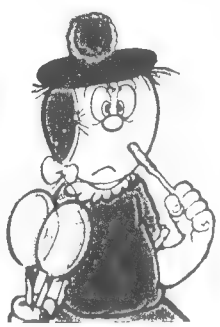
issue, and Leo even succeeded in tempting Ken Reid from Thomsons. Such was the success of the title that *Smash!* was created as a follow up for which he dreamed up 'Bad Penny', 'The Nerves', 'The Swots and the Blots' and 'Grimly Feendish', later followed by *Pow* using more Baxendale ideas and creations.

When Odhams was absorbed by I.P.C. Magazines, Leo continued to draw, taking on some of the strips he had created full-time (e.g. 'The Swots and the Blots' for *Smash!* and later *Valiant* when those titles were amalgamated), and many new creations, chief amongst them 'The Pirates' and 'Mervyn's Monsters' for *Buster*, 'Bluebottle and Basher' for *Valiant*, 'The Lion Lot' for *Lion*, 'Clever Dick' for *Buster*, 'The Kids of Stalag 41' for *Jet* and 'Sweeny Toddler' for *Shiver & Shake*. His last strips for I.P.C. were the classic 'Bad Time Bed Time Books', usually based around classic stories and fairy tales ranging from 'Jack the Nipper' to 'Marzipan of the Apes'.

Most of these are recognised classics, and most of them starred kids which, when Leo started, was not so normal: "I think when I came to *The Beano* I was very aware of what had gone before in comics and, for instance, kids were usually 'Casey's Court' in *Chips*, a sort of continuation of Victorian bare-foot urchins - poverty made glamorous. I was a very intolerant kid, and I didn't like Casey's Court at all, and as I grew older I didn't like the public schoolboy stuff. It was always public schoolboys! When I came to do the Bash Street kids I had something else in mind. There weren't that many kids in *Beano* - Dennis, which I admired greatly, and there had been Pansy Potter, which disappeared when Bash Street came in." The sparsity of kid characters was very much a thing of the thirties, where the most popular characters were film stars and world-weary travellers.

"I was very conscious of that, particularly with *Film Fun* which was just about all adult characters, and middle-aged ones at that. In *Chips* there were a few kids, but they were usually sidekicks to somebody. By the time I came to do Bash Street and Minnie I was 22, which doesn't sound very old, but you've had a long life by then, and I had a very clear idea of what I wanted. I don't know why it happened because we all did it independently. There was no conference of comics artists who said 'Right, we're going to do kids'. It just happened that way.

Bash Street Kids, Little Plum, Minnie the Minx © D.C. Thomson



"It was a kind of haphazard thing. I think all the time I was following my nose. When you're working in the market every day and having to make quick decisions your mind works so fast and you make decisions so abruptly that your brain is synthesising an awful lot on its own. I'd never differentiated much between kids and adults. You'll notice that people will talk to young kids in a different voice that they would normally use. I've never done that in my life, I simply regarded kids as people who hadn't lived very long. But at the same time, by the time a kid is 6 or 7 they've encountered so much in life you can provide them with a very large structure of comedy to interact with. And at the time I wasn't stopping to think 'These are kids. I can't do that'. I just did anything that made me burst out laughing. Really it was just drawing for myself and for that burst of laughter when I took the drawings into *The Beano*.

"There was something else about *The Beano*: it wasn't just kids. There was this tremendous subterranean readership. I created Bash Street in October and moved up to Dundee at the end of November; I was going into the offices two or three times a week and saw the fanmail - I was surprised by some of these letters from adults."

WILLY THE KID

Baxendale left I.P.C. in 1975, and created Willy the Kid in a series of three hardback books published by Gerald Duckworth. It wasn't only Willy, but another gang of characters who floated in and out of the stories, which, at last, weren't limited to the weekly one or two pages. "It gave an extra dimension to the humour," agrees Leo. "If I got hold of a really good story in my mind and started to work on it, I could just go on and on. I think I did one of 13 pages, and it was great, I could just keep pushing the frontier of absurdity further and further. And you don't have to slam straight into the storyline: you can come in at a bit of an angle.

"The funny thing with the *Willy the Kid* books was, although I wasn't working to a weekly deadline the deadline would come, and towards the end of the year I was still working through the night so it would get to the printers I always started early enough - I was very self-motivated - but I wasn't always logical about what I could squeeze in. I must have known very well that if I poured all this stuff in I was going to run out of time later on - but I did it anyway! When all the tension and trauma has gone you can look back on it and think *That was great*, but it can be a bit fearsome at the time."

THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THE BEANO: IT WASN'T JUST KIDS

Willy was Leo's last creation for the British market for many years. He was invited to draw a strip for the Dutch magazine *Eppo* in 1979, creating 'Baby Basil', although Basil had appeared earlier in the Willy the Kid books: "At the time he was simply Willy's baby brother, just a toddler who crawled along the ground and went down rabbit holes. He gradually grew up to 3-years old, and stopped there."

In May 1980 Leo began a high court action against D.C. Thomson to gain recognition as the creator of his *Beano* characters. The case took seven years and was eventually settled out of court with Leo granted a stake in the publishing and merchandising rights until then held exclusively by Thomsons. He celebrated the decision by turning in his most outrageous book: *Thrrp!*. "You're supposed to blow a raspberry, but I can't do it!" he laughs.

"I was dodging about from all this documentation, because I ended up with a 187-page draft proof for evidence, an enormous tome which would have been the skeleton of what I would have said in the witness box, and at the same time I was dodging aside to put this book together. That accounts for the adventurous use of white space in some parts.

"I hadn't drawn for seven years, so it was an absolute standing start: you don't forget how to draw, but I do find that if you have a lay off you do get a bit out of focus. When you're drawing your best stuff you need a seeing eye and all your faculties need to be fiercely concentrated."

Soon after the decision, Leo began self-publishing a series of books, the first part of *The Encroachment*, and *On Comedy: The Beano and Ideology* which is just about to see a second edition, and the forthcoming *Pictures in the Mind*. Over the past few years he's exhibited his own work in France, Italy and the UK, notably the 'Stripped of Illusion' tour in 1989 which, indirectly, led to the current tour: "One of the places it stopped was the Harris Museum in Preston, and apparently they got more people, and a wider range of people, than any exhibition they'd ever done." The idea for a 40th birthday party for Minnie and the Bash Street kids expanded into a new exhibition, and with sponsorship from the Royal Mail, it becomes a national tour running through 1994 and 1995. The new tour is more a multi-media event, with Leo's video study of his own work, and film shot at an Italian exhibition in Treviso.

"We're collecting archive material like mad," he admits. "We just stuck the camera on its tripod and left it running, so people didn't notice it. There were these predominantly middle-class, professional Italian people grouping around the drawings, pointing at them and talking about them, and some of them stood there looking at individual drawings for as long as 20 minutes. Filming the people who go to the exhibitions and recording their little gestures and the way they go on about some detail in the drawing is absolutely fascinating."

No doubt Leo will be bringing his camera to the Harris Museum, where the exhibition will run until January 29 1994, following the trail of destruction left by Minnie the Minx, sneaking a look at the life-size sculptures created for the show, and chasing the silhouette figures of the Bash Street kids as they slide down the banisters of the Harris' marble staircase - and filming some of the estimated 40,000 visitors the Museum expects to attract. Kids of all ages.

He could be filming you. CW

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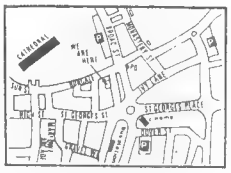

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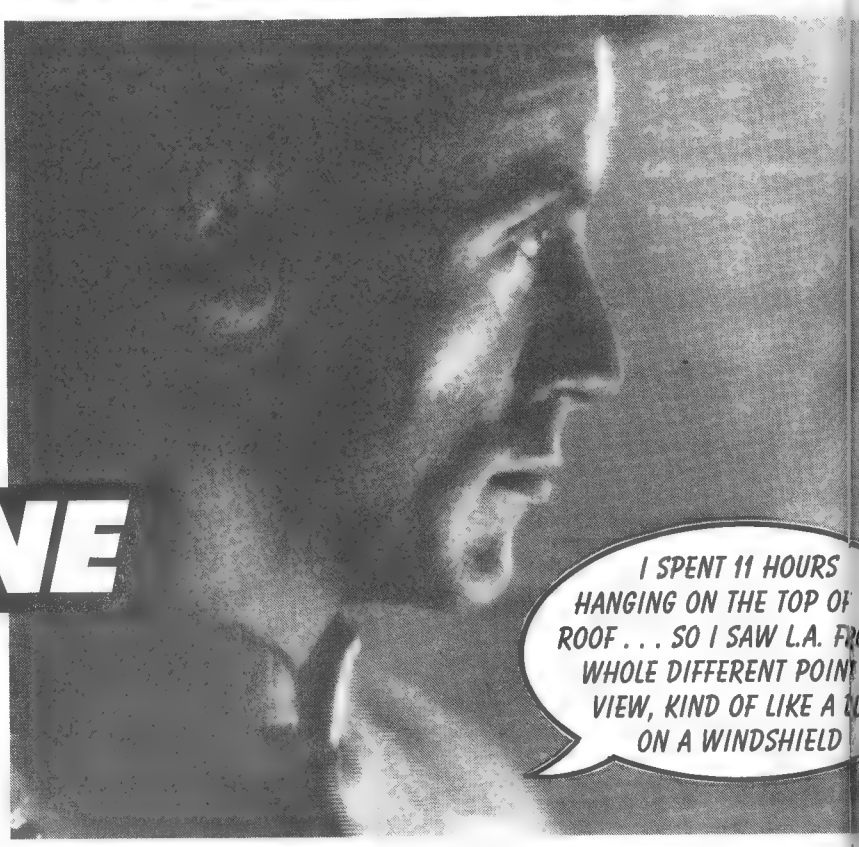
The Demoli

*AFTER THREE RAMBOS, FIVE ROCKYS AND INNUMERABLE OTHER TOUGH GUYS, **SYLVESTER STALLONE** IS BACK TEARING UP THE SCREEN AS SUPERCOP JOHN SPARTAN IN THE FUTURISTIC THRILLER **DEMOLITION MAN**. TONY EARNSHAW GOT THE LOW-DOWN ON THE TROUBLED FILMING OF THE MOVIE FROM THE MAN HIMSELF.*



STALLONE

It's taken him long enough, but Sylvester Stallone has finally woken us to the fact that men like him are made to play heroes.

For nine long years, from* Rocky *in 1976 to* Rambo: First Blood Part II *in 1985, Stallone had the hero business firmly sewn up. Then along came a modest little sci-fi movie called* The Terminator, *and a former Mr Universe with the jaw-cracking monicker of Schwarzenegger, to usurp the Italian Stallion from his hard-earned throne.

Stallone was lost. While he knocked out Dolph Lundgren in *Rocky IV*, Arnie took on hordes of machine gun-toting nasties in *Commando*. Sly accepted $10 million for the trashy *Over The Top* while Arnie, ever the businessman, was astute enough to recognise comic strip heroes were big business. He made *Predator*. In just three years, the roles had been reversed. Where once Stallone could be assured of the best scripts landing in his lap, most were now being given the once-over by Schwarzenegger.

It got worse. Arnie trotted out a string of mega-dollar hits – *The Running Man*, *Total Recall*, *Kindergarten Cop*, and followed up with a stunning cinematic 'coup de grace': *Terminator 2 – Judgement Day*. Meanwhile, Stallone's career took a nosedive. What had he made to compete? The answer made grim reading: *Cobra*, *Lock Up*, *Tango & Cash*, *Oscar* and, worst of all, the awful *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot*.

If *Oscar* put the kiss of death on Sly's career, *Stop!* was the suicide note. He halted the rot with *Cliffhanger*, a major summer blockbuster and the movie which put his star back into orbit.

Cliffhanger was a welcome hit, and thoroughly trounced Arnie's lacklustre *Last Action Hero*. Now Sly is once again back among the heroes with his hard-ass cop John Spartan in *Demolition Man*, in which he plays a thawed-out 20th century cop on the trail on thawed-out 20th century villain Wesley Snipes in the Los Angeles of 2032.

But the movie very nearly didn't get made at all. Stallone suffered a catalogue of injuries, not least a broken leg. But enough of this. Here's Sly himself to reveal what happened both on and off the set, and how he nearly lost a rib.

"We're all born with this particular vein. In some people it crosses over or under their rib, and in some it's connected to their rib with a tendon.

"Well I had a real bad injury in *Rocky II* which required 160 stitches under my arm because my pec muscle had been torn off. It's been reattached to my shoulder, cut through a window and connected with nylon.

"So there had already been damage there. When I started to build my chest up, as it got bigger it began to compress the vein, which was already about 50 per cent closed.

"Then it went down to 93 per cent accluded, and my arm turned this beautiful shade of Wedgewood blue. It was getting worse and worse, so I had to stop exercising, let the body shrink and let the vein open. It could have been horrible," he says with a frown.

Stallone's home-grown remedy hardly convinced his doctors. He was taken away in the middle of the night by scalpel-happy surgeons who not only wanted to operate immediately, they wanted to remove his first rib.

"You know you're in trouble when the doctor meets you at the door with a meat cleaver!" he adds. "They wanted to go right away, but I said 'I don't think so. I'm kinda used to my rib, it's a friend of mine. I'm not giving up my rib for nobody!' "

With the risk of blood clots, rib removals and major operations out the way, Stallone was able to concentrate on the movie – his first SF outing since his co-starring role, as Machine Gun Joe Viterbo, in *Death Race 2000*!!

The plot runs thus. Modern-day supercop John Spartan is framed for a crime he didn't commit and, as punishment, is cryogenically frozen. Years later, he's thawed out to take on his old adversary Simon Phoenix, a villain so resourceful and intelligent the LAPD of the future can't cope. Early reports all point to a big hit, with Stallone and Snipes on great over-the-top form. Good thing too, with Stallone working so hard on his action sequences and stuntwork he also broke a leg.

"It was dumb. We were doing it at 2am, and I thought I was looking so cool. All there was to do was some screeching up in this GTO. I come powering into the scene with my gun, jump out and shout 'Alright!' and realise it's still in drive. And it's moving.

"So now I can fry an egg on my head, I'm so embarrassed. I run back to the car – the film's still running – I jump back in, my leg's hanging out, I slam on the brake and the door closes right on my leg.

"And now, I swear to God, I'm talking to dead relatives, I'm seeing pyramids in the sky, birds whistling . . . I cannot believe it – I've now broken my leg," he says with a sheepish half-smile.

In another sequence which went without a hitch, even Stallone was impressed with the finished product.

Demolition Man
© Warner Films

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WESLEY SNIPES IS ONE OF TINSELTOWN'S MOST BUSY ACTORS. THIS AUTUMN YOU CAN HARDLY VISIT A CINEMA WITHOUT SEEING HIS FACE ON POSTERS AND UP THERE ON THE BIG SCREEN. BUT MR SNIPES HAS NO INTENTION OF SLOWING DOWN. JOHN MOSBY TALKED WITH THE RISING SON HIMSELF. . . .

SNIPES

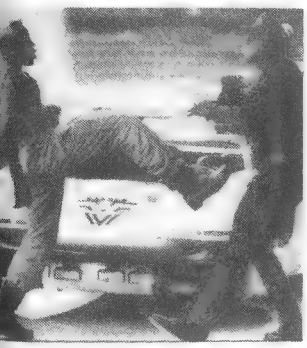
As in many 'overnight success' stories in Hollywood, Wesley has in fact been around for sometime, but it is his most recent movies that have catapulted him into the A-List of acting. Anybody remember* Wildcats, *the 1985 vehicle for Goldie Hawn? That was Wesley's first real break, but he nearly missed out on his role completely by missing the auditions. By the time he turned up, the role had already been cast and it was a full two months later, when the original choice for the role was given the boot, that Wes got the fateful call-up. Since then, he has slowly built up a body of work that any actor could be proud of. After* Major League, *he starred in Spike Lee's* Mo' Better Blues, *but it was the phenomenal success of the hard and gritty* New Jack City *in 1991 that caught the attention of public and casting agents alike. Later the same year, he rejoined Spike Lee for the role of Flipper Purify in the controversial inter-racial love story* Jungle Fever. *Suddenly, he (and co-star Annabella Sciorra) found their faces on the cover of* Newsweek *. . . It was becoming clear that this so-called newcomer had officially arrived!

Not one for resting on his laurels, the Spring of '92 saw Snipes enjoying more success in *White Men Can't Jump*.

"Every black actor that ever . . . he didn't even have to play basketball, he just needed to have seen it on television . . . they ALL came in and auditioned. It was a madhouse. EVERYBODY was there!"

Needless to say, he won the role, against heavy competition and nowadays the roles are being offered rather than fought for. *Passenger 57* (a kind of *Die Higher*) was given to Wes and the role of caucasian Peter Smith in the adaption of Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* became the black Web 'Spider' Smith for the film itself.

Being a story that is very much set around the Japanese business world, there was also an obvious language problem. I asked Wesley how he learnt the necessary dialogue. "Both phonetically and tonally. It sounds like music to me, I listen to the tone. They brought me some people in, some consultants and we went through the pronounciation of various Japanese words, but I'd already been exposed to Japanese culture through my martial arts training and through a lot of friends I have that are Japanese."



Good thing too; he'd just spent the best part of half a day clinging to a car's roof.

"That was another one. Wesley is driving and I'm jumping on the top of a car and he just keeps driving and driving and driving. There were no mistakes on that one. It's a fantastic scene.

"I spent 11 hours hanging on the top of a roof in the middle of the night, going down LA. So I saw LA from a whole different point of view, kind of like a bug on a windshield!"

The anticipated success of *Demolition Man* has no doubt whetted Sly's appetite for futuristic movies – he's just signed for the title role in *Judge Dredd* a hugely expensive adaptation of the British comic strip character to be directed by cockney wunderkind Danny (*The Young Americans*) Cannon. Ten years ago, the choice of a vertically-challenged, Italianesque New Yorker with a mild speech impediment playing the right-wing lawman would have been

continued over

"[STALLONE] DROPPED A FEW PEARLS OF WISDOM AND WARNED ME ABOUT SOME OF THE MISTAKES TO WATCH OUT FOR . . . SUCH AS 15 CARS, 17 BODYGUARDS, 3 MARRIAGES, ALIMONY. . . ."

Wesley's partner in *Rising Sun* is veteran actor Sean Connery, that must have been somewhat daunting.

"It was great, I had a lot of fun. He was very kind and very dignified. He always got on at me for being 'late', he was always fifteen to twenty minutes ahead of time. He'd say . . . 'Whatsh wrong . . . you deshide to walk today?' He knew that was funny because no-one walks in California, everyone drives. We've talked on the telephone and he's taken me to dinner a few times since and he gave a lot of advice on the business and his personal experiences. He's a hell of a negotiator, I like that."

In the case of *Demolition Man* (in which Snipes plays peroxide-haired future sociopath Simon Phoenix) he has an equally well-known face alongside him, Judge Dredd-to-be Sly Stallone. Did the Italian have any advice?

"We got along real well, as well. We could relate, we'd both come from nothing and travelled down the rocky road. He dropped a few pearls of wisdom and warned me about some of the mistakes to watch out for."

Such as.

"Such as 15 cars, 17 bodyguards, 3 marriages, alimony out the whoosh!"

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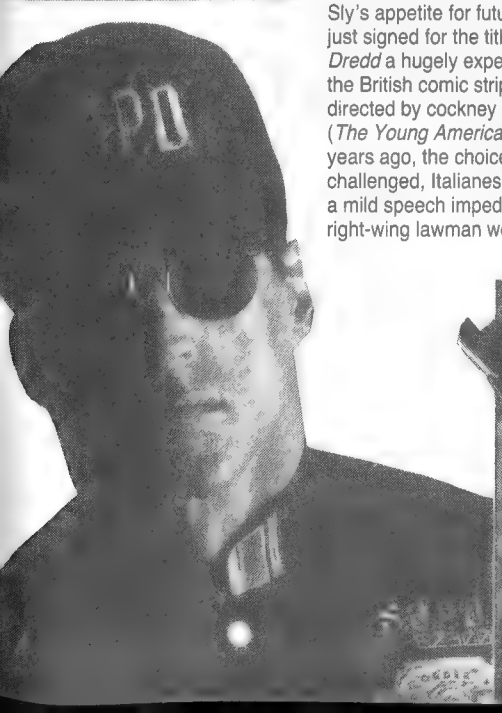

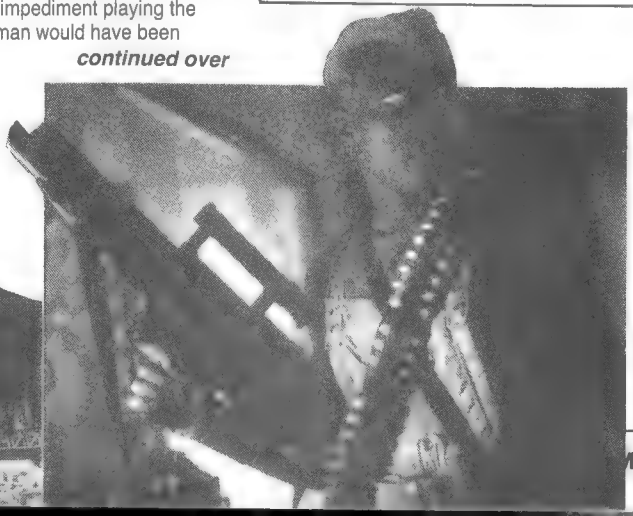

LEO BAXENDALE STRIPOGRAPHY

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Many thanks to Ray Moore for his assistance.

STALLONE

VERY hard to swallow, but with the ever-reliable Clint Eastwood now looking, at 63, just a little too wrinkled, the obvious choice went straight out of the window. After this two outings as the Terminator, Schwarzenegger was a close contender for Dredd, as was Kurt Russell, who could have re-run his performance from *Escape From New York*. But Stallone won out, and filming is set to begin next year.

So what does Sly think of bringing to life a man for whom The Law is not just a way of life but a state of mind? Surprisingly enough, he'd rather play a villain.

"In *Demolition Man* the bad guy is Wesley, who has blonde hair, one blue eye and gets to do all those snidey, whiplash, moustache-twisting one-liners. I'd love to do it, but right now I'm not sure that people would buy it. I wouldn't want to be *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, that's too close to home, but I'd like to play something dastardly, kind of an ambiguous bad guy."

Given Dredd's track record as an immovable, stoic, unbending force, maybe Mr Stallone will get his chance. . . .

SNIPES

CONTINUED

The future also looks rosy for Snipes. He'll soon be working on his first self-penned script, provisionally entitled *Seekers*. "It's the story of a group of friends I have in New Jersey, six black guys and one white guy who are all bounty-hunters and who travel nationally and internationally retrieving state fugitives. They all have different backgrounds and have never worked together prior to this guy bringing them together. They have a very metaphysical approach to it . . . and they carry a lot of big guns! I wouldn't direct it . . . I've seen what's happening with a few young directors I've worked with and there's nearly been mutiny on the set. I'm not saying who, I'm definitely not saying Mario Van Peebles!"

He's also signed on the dotted line for the role of *The Black Panther*, the Marvel Comics character. "Yeah, that's right. We haven't got a start date for that, but I've seen the first thirty-forty pages of the script and they are Slammin'. It's being written by Terry Haines, who wrote the Road Warrior series. *The Black Panther* will be the first black superhero for the major screen, it's a biggie. Everybodys excited about that."

So, another star, another superhero. One thing for certain . . . Hollywood's interest in the world of comics and comic-book action is showing no signs of slowing down. Dredd, The Black Panther, Spider-Man – all with big budgets and great promise. If they do as well as is hoped there's always the chance that series such as *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* will also get their day on the silver screen. With enthusiastic and talented stars such as Wesley Snipes on board, there's every good chance the medium will continue to be taken more and more seriously.

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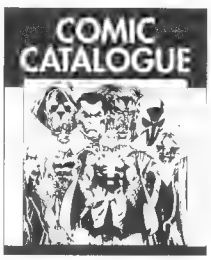

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MARVEL NEWS CONTINUED

one issue from the end and counting...the original Starhawk is back in *Guardian's of the Galaxy #45*...and the Comic Code Authority approve of *Harrowers #3* as they begin a new direction for Clive Barker's creations...talking of whom, Trip Munroe takes a trip from *Hokum & Hex #5* to join *Hyperkind #6* in the conclusion of the first Razorline crossover... iMarvel Year-in-Review '93 is a 48-page humorous look at the past year at Marvel, parodying the X-Men and Avengers' original line-ups and taking a look at Marvel's greatest licensing failures...the 'Conan the Cimmerian' storyline based on the book by Andrew J. Offutt concludes in *Savage Sword of Conan #218*...*Secret Defenders #12* has a prismatic foil cover...*Spider-Woman* concludes her solo adventure in #4...Epic provide the *William Shatner's TekWorld Trade Paperback*, 120-pages of adventures with a man called Jake Cardigan, alongside an interview with Shatner and an exclusive preview of the soon-to-be-seen TV adaptation (which Shatner is directing the first episode of and making a cameo appearance)...Wolverine faces off Lady Deathstryke in *Wolverine #78*...Spider-Man guests in *Wonder Man #29*...a major new villainess splits the X-Folks by convincing some that the only future for mutantkind is to destroy humanity! The story in *X-Factor #99* leads up to next month's celebration issue...*X-Men Adventures Season II #1* relaunches the animated adventure adaptations as Jean and Scott's wedding is interrupted by Morph returns - and they thought he was dead...and there's a 96-page trade paperback collection of the first four stories from the original *X-Men Adventures* series...Professor X guest stars in *Excalibur #74*, now a bonafide X-title...part 2 of 'Troyjan Wars' - in *Incredible Hulk #414* - features Silver Sable as Hulk and Pantheon head for outer space to rescue the kidnapped Atlanta...*Silver Surfer vs Dracula* is a 48-page reprint from the pages of *Tomb of Dracula #50*, adding two pre-Code horror yarns...*Iron Man #301* begins a new 6-part storyline, 'Crash and Burn',

SHAZAM!

With one magic word, a bolt of lightning, a clap of thunder, the original Captain Marvel returns in a 96-page hardcover graphic novel, *The Power of Shazam!*, written and fully painted by Jerry Ordway. Captain Marvel was the best-selling superhero title back in the 1940s, having first appeared in *Whiz Comics #2* (Feb 1940). By 1943, his solo comic *Captain Marvel Adventures* was selling over a million and in 1946 was hitting a million and a half. But an action taken out by National (later DC) in 1941 dragged the original publishers through the courts for over a decade, DC claiming the character was too close to Superman, the action finally killing the character in 1953.

Then, fate being what it is, DC relaunched the character in 1973!

The 1994 version, shipping January 11, is a retelling of the Big Red Cheese's origin and first adventure, the story of how Billy Batson became an orphan on the streets of Fawcett City, the origins of his foes, and sets up an ongoing monthly.

DC are also relisting *The Shazam! Archives*, a 208-page hardcover collection from the pages of *Whiz Comics #2-15*, priced $49.95, which includes the first appearance of Captain Thunder from rare ashcan editions of *Flash Comics* and *Thrill Comics* - which Captain Marvel was to be known as.

ROUND-UP

Not confirmed, but we hear that the Az-bat finale may not actually appear in either *Batman* or *Detective Stories*. And Azrael will spin-off into his own series, which may be the new ongoing Bat-book, mentioned by Barry Kitson during a UKCAC panel, to be written by Denny O'Neill.

Green Lantern #50 **is a 48-page special with a glow-in-the-dark cover featuring the conclusion of the 3-part 'Emerald Twilight' storyline and features Hal Jordan's new costume and a devastating turning point in the history of the Green Lantern Corps which will spin the title in a new direction and star a new Green Lantern. It all follows events in the 'Reign of the Supermen' storyline when Coast City was destroyed: Hal sought powers which destroyed the ancient Green Lantern Corps, and when the Guardians reinstate Sinestro to stop Jordan, Hal kills him. Now, on Oa, Hal enters the giant power batteries and becomes something *more*, and the fading Guardians find a new ring bearer.**

Superman: 'Under A Yellow Sun' a novel by Clark Kent **is the unwieldy title for a new 64-page prestige format one-shot written by John Francis Moore and drawn by two sets of artists. Clark Kent uses his writing of *Under a Yellow Sun* to channel the frustrations of his everyday life as Superman at a time when he is battling Lex Luthor's manipulation of a gang war. The real-life sequences are drawn by Kerry Gammill & Dennis Janke, whilst Eduardo Barreto draws the novel, the story of a man with a double life.**

16-year-old Courtney Mason is *Anima*, the star of a new ongoing superhero series which spins off in the wake of 'Bloodbath'. A creature of incredible power, the Animus, lives within her. Together they find themselves in Gotham where a street gang's attack on a young girl may just prove Anima to be the most powerful force on Earth. Written by Elizabeth Hand & Paul Witcover, with art by Malcolm David & Chris Ivy, the story debuts on February 1.

John Constantine celebrates a 48-page *Hellblazer #75* with the opening of the 4-part 'Damnation's Flame' storyline set in America where JC springs a trap set by his old adversary, Papa Midnight. There's a back-up story which recounts his first meeting with Kit, and gives details of his dead pal, Brendan, who will feature in *#76*. February 1 will see the release of *Hellblazer: Dangerous Habits*, a collection of Garth Ennis' first JC story from *#41-46*.

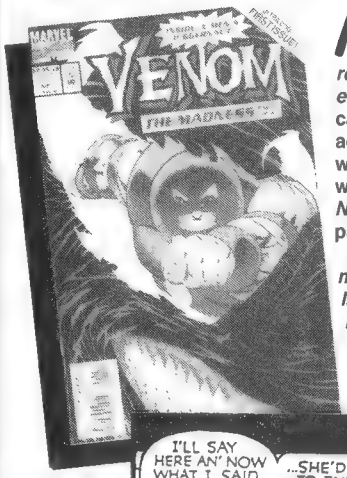
Grant Morrison & Mark Millar take over *Swamp Thing* with #140 for a massive shake-up of the character: the story opens with Alec Holland waking up in a South American hospital, sweating and disorientated from strange feverish dreams in which he shambled through the swamps...yet he is still somehow connected to the silver-haired Abigail Arcane and a savage, murderous creature running amok and killing folks in the Louisiana swamps. This issue also introduces artist Phillip Hester and cover artist John Mueller.

The countdown to *Zero Hour* begins in *Valor #17*, shipping January 11 which sets in motion a paradox that threatens to fracture history. Valor dies! And without Valor, the Legion of Super-Heroes and the Legionnaires cannot exist, and in the 30th century, reality, stretched to its limits...snaps! Time begins to unravel, all leading to the summer cross-over and zero hour.

Rebecca Guay arrives from the pages of *2099 Unlimited* to become the new penciller of *Black Orchid* with #7...the 8-part 'World Tour' concludes in *Deathstroke, the Terminator #34*...*Green Lantern Corps Quarterly #8* is the final issue...'The Brute' is revealed in the concluding episode of the latest story of *Sandman Mystery Theatre #12*...*The Best of Star Trek: The Next Generation* is a trade paperback collection of *ST: TNG #5-6,19* and *Annual #2*, plus a story from *Annual #1* by series star John deLancie, priced $19.95...Paul Kupperberg, Luke McDonald & Ricardo Villagran are the guest creators for *Hawkman #7-8* a 2-parter entitled 'King of the Netherworld'...and guesting on *Icon #11* is Kurt Busiek & Ron Wilson...and Stuart Immonen guest pencils *Superman #87* which is part 1 of 'Bizarro's World, a 5-part x-over which continues through *Adventures of Superman #510*, *Action Comics #697* and concludes next month in *Man of Steel #32* and *Superman #88*...*Legends of the Dark Knight #58* is a one-off entitled 'Storm' with art by John Higgins...the 'Leader's identity is revealed in *Team Titan's #18*...

A quick 'Knightfall: The Crusade' roundup: in *Batman #505* Bruce decides to upgrade his costume (maybe with a zip fly?) which leads to *Shadow of the Bat #25* which features The Corrosive Man (ouch!) and an appearance of Joe Public, the New Blood from the *Shadow of the Bat Annual*; and *Detective Comics #672* features The Joker.

REVIEWS



Many great men have attempted to shed light on that great enigma that is Woman, and Man's relationship with her. Consider, for example, the words of Oscar Wilde: **Men can be analysed, women . . . merely adored*; Samuel Pepys:* Music and women I cannot but give way to, whatever my business is*, or indeed Norm Peterson:* Can't live with 'em . . . pass the beer nuts.**

As I mentioned in passing last month, comic's readers are by and large male, and this fact holds true for its creators. Comics – certainly super-hero comics – are essentially a boy's playground with most girls peering over the fence with bemusement.

I'LL SAY HERE AN' NOW WHAT I SAID ON YOUR PROMENADE...
...SHE'D BE LUCKIER TO END UP LIKE THEM TWO.
A GHOST CONTACT, Ms. SALAZAR. MARIA SAID SO AT THE TIME. AND THAT WAS HOURS BEFORE THIS ATTACK.
WE TOLD YOU ALL WE KNEW ON THE SCENE-- WHAT'S THIS TO DO WITH US?
YOU FILED A SIGHTING REPORT
REGARDLESS OF ANY REPORT OF OURS, YOUR OWN PROCTORS SHOULD HAVE SOUNDED AN ALARM THE MOMENT THAT WINDOW WAS BREACHED.

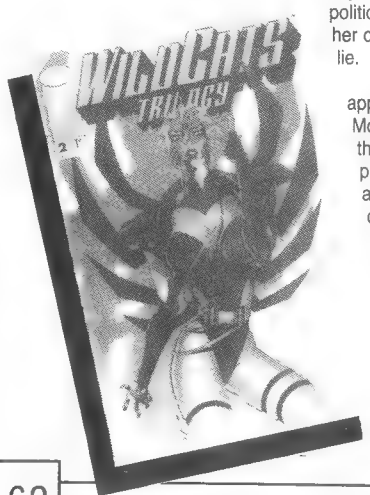
Given the form's general exclusion of women, how are female characters portrayed by men? For many years, the comic book was rather reluctant to have anything to do with women, except to present them as shrill, fragile creatures either being rescued by the hero or trying to marry him. Today, the woman is more likely to be trying to eat the hero: witness Sue Richards, the First Lady of the Marvel Universe, who began as a simpering ninny who'd faint as soon as cast an invisible force shield, but lately has become a semi-naked Amazon berserker – today's new stereotype.

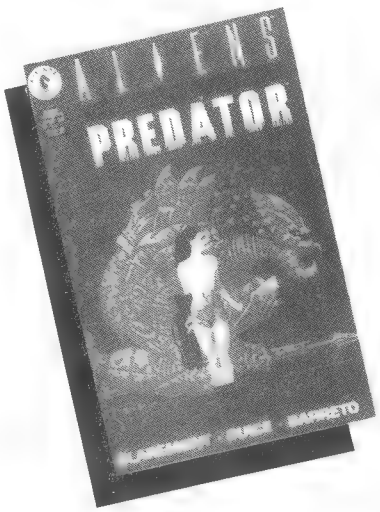
Now *there's* a much-abused word for you: to accuse even the most ineptly thought-out walking *cliché* of a character of being a stereotype is a risky proposition. There is always a case that can be made that the character is an individual in a unique situation; to make a writer use only the personality traits from some politically correct checklist in his or her creations would be to foster a lie.

There is also the issue of appropriateness of treatment. Most of the women you'll find in the superhero genre are parodies of models – slim, tall and perfectly-featured, they definitely ate up all their greens when they were kids. This distortion of reality is parallelled in those strapping young men you'll find everywhere. This is a genre of heroic fantasy; it trades in ideals.

So an understanding of context can allow the reader to overlook what might have been failings, although I'm not sure Chris Halls' **Comic World** cover last month gets off the hook that easily. Here and in **Wild C.A.T.S.: Trilogy 2** (Image, $1.95), for example, the women are portrayed dismissively as decoration; and for whose benefit? Jae Lee's art in *C.A.T.S.* is a catalogue of semi-naked Amazon berserker dolls, coyly draped in scraps of cloth, straining their bodies in the midst of battle to show breasts and buttocks to good advantage whenever possible. Fantasy is too exotic a term to be applied to this sad parade; it's simple voyeurism which demeans its onlookers.

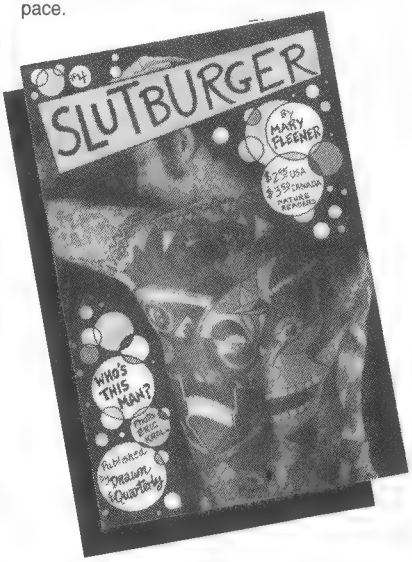
Contrast *C.A.T.S.* with DC's revival of **Outsiders** ($1.75). Split across two editions, Travis Charest's cover for the first issue is a Klaxon appeal to the Image constituency; the fiercely traditional interiors come as a surprise. Mike Barr, picking up just where he left off, and Paul Pelletier presents a roster which may include Looker, a predictably flirtatious redhead-in-a-basque, but only as part of a varied range of female personalities. If you choose to have a soft spot for Looker anyway, well okay, but at least *Outsiders* avoids the frequent and unnecessary blanket presentation of women as toys.





The Deadliest Of The Species (for goodness' sake . . .) is the sub-title of the new Chris Claremont-scripted **Aliens/ Predator** series (Dark Horse, $2.50). Claremont has a long-standing reputation for writing 'strong women': this refers to his awarding of equal rights to women in his portrayal of archetypes. His women are suitably beautiful, assured and compassionate; they are indomitable. This never stopped Claremont playing with the domination of his heroines: think of senes of Jason Wyngarde, the Shadow King or Pretty Boy in *X-Men*, as they took a good girl and made her bad, with a veiled hint that this was what she'd always wanted. The employment of this moral violation is recurrent in comics, more often as an opportunity to dress a heroine in a sexy new costume and make her act naughty than to explore the issues raised by the act. Although issue 2 of *Deadliest* uses rape imagery in an early scene, here it's used unambiguously to reinforce our sensation of a terrifying experience for the protagonist, and her struggle against alien creatures and earthbound nature which follows on from this is intriguing and tense storytelling.

Over in another corner of the playground, here's the start of another **Venom** mini-series: **The Madness** (Marvel, $2.95). The embossed cover and attendant blurbs – 'ULTRA COOL FIRST ISSUE!' indeed – indicate business as usual, but Ann Nocenti and Kelley Jones have slipped past security and are vandalising our expectations. Nocenti's one-liners deal with Venom's thuggery *mischievously*, of all things, and she explores themes of man's sometimes violent lack of self-control, and woman's fascination with it, at breakneck pace.

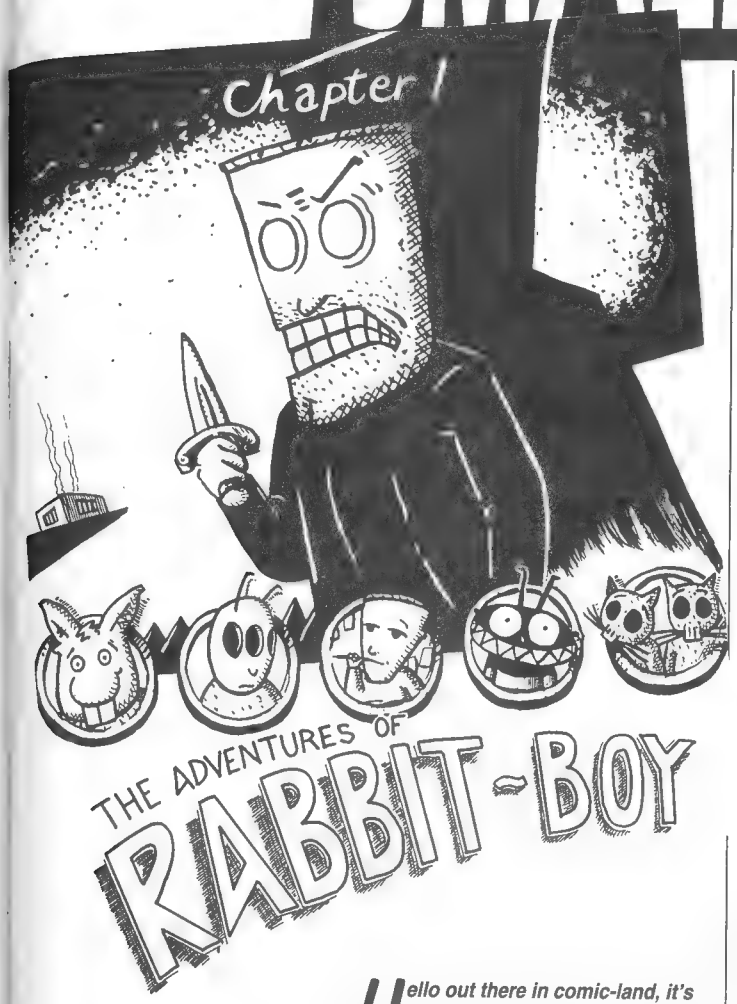


While outside, the grown-ups are playing grown-up games; Mary Fleener's **Slutburger 4** (Drawn And Quarterly, $2.95) negotiates the sexual minefield in a vivid style that throws all sorts of influences into the artistic mix – her startling moves into Cubism to describe moments of passion, for example. The short pieces descend into complaceny at times; women are cool, men have dicks for brains, yeah yeah, heard it all before. No doubt Fleener would defend her use of these *outragous* clichés with some ridiculous assertion that these are individual characters in unique situations . . . can't pull the wool over my eyes with all that fancy talk (mutter). . . .

Richard Hill

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (Telephone 021-643 3667). Prices are quoted in dollars; the sterling rate may vary slightly from shop to shop.

SMALL PRESS



Rabbit-Boy "a twisty turny thing"

Hello out there in comic-land, it's your uncle Stevie here to tell you all about some of the great new small press titles that are available right now. First up this month is* Le Roquet. *This is a serious bit of work here. Released in French and English by Les Cartoonists Dangereux,* Le Roquet *is a collection of works from some of the finest European cartoonists. Initially produced for the 19th Salon International De La Bande Dessinée, at Angoulême last year, it now aims to help further the appreciation of comics as an art form within this country. In France you see, cartoonists are treated by the government as human beings, not schoolchildren who never grew up. To illustrate this, Les Cartoonists have put together a fine collection of strips ranging from the irreverent to the artistically accomplished. I won't list all the contributors, but suffice to say that they number amongst them, Brad! Brooks, Sylvie Joly, Dylan Horrocks, Roger Langridge and Yasmin Butt in no particular order. With many other projects in the pipeline, Les Cartoonists Dangereux will be a force to watch out for.

Captain Dolphin makes you laugh! True! C.D. artist, Ralph Kidson has a very simple style, but is so silly that you can't fail to crack a smile. It's true; I read it on the tube and felt like a right fool. Dry humour mixed with utter stupidity such as this has not been seen since Monty Python split up, and they didn't even draw comics. Issue 5 of *Captain Dolphin* is out now, and it even won an award from the Comic Creator's Guild. How's that for approval?

Harpy by Nick Mackie is something else entirely. This comic is dark, man! If Nick lived in America he would have his own Fantagraphics series. The first story 'Rabbit Boy', starts innocently enough. But the tale twists and turns like a twisty turny thing until you lose the thread of what's going on around the part where Rabbit Boy encounters a manic compulsive washing his hands 93 times in the bowels of an eerie hospital where the cats he made sick on the first page (by standing them in a pool of water) are recovering by eating a magic fish who sings hymns! Phew, I hope that gives some idea of the sort of thing you are up against. This is macabre, surreal brilliance! Fans of Idiotland, Butt Biscuit, The Cheeseheads, etc should really get to grips with *Harpy*.

The second compilation for this month is *Sofa Comics*. By sheer coincidence this has a Captain Dolphin strip in it, which has to be a plus mark straight away. Production values are slightly lower here than the other comics in this review. A4 format looks great, but I think their photocopier was having a rough day, as some of the pages haven't reproduced clearly. Still, technical gripes aside this has a great mixture of work. I guess that many of the artists here are newer to the biz than Les Cartoonists, but there are some great showings. I particularly like the strips from Jo Bourne (catch her work also in *GirlFrenzy* magazine) and Peter Poole. There's also a witty little take on the Comics Creators Guild's logo. *Sofa Comics* is promising and definitely worth the £1 entry fee.

Last out of the bag for this month is *Brotherman*. Now you may well have heard of this before, as it has been reviewed all over the place. It's unlikely you have seen it however, because up till now it has been next to impossible to find. Produced by three brothers in America it is the vanguard in an uprising of comics by black artists using black characters in a realistic way. Forget those superhero comics which use a 'homeboy' character that is simply a genre superhero in black-face, this is the real McCoy.

Brotherman is set in a mythical "Big City" that could be anywhere in USA of the very near future. With unemployment and inflation at record levels, I guess this comic examines the hopes and dreams of some of the city's denizens. Much more at the forefront however is the story of Brotherman who in his own words gives ". . . a little hope to a system that has little else! When you begin to look at yourself as part of the solution, you join the ranks in the battle against

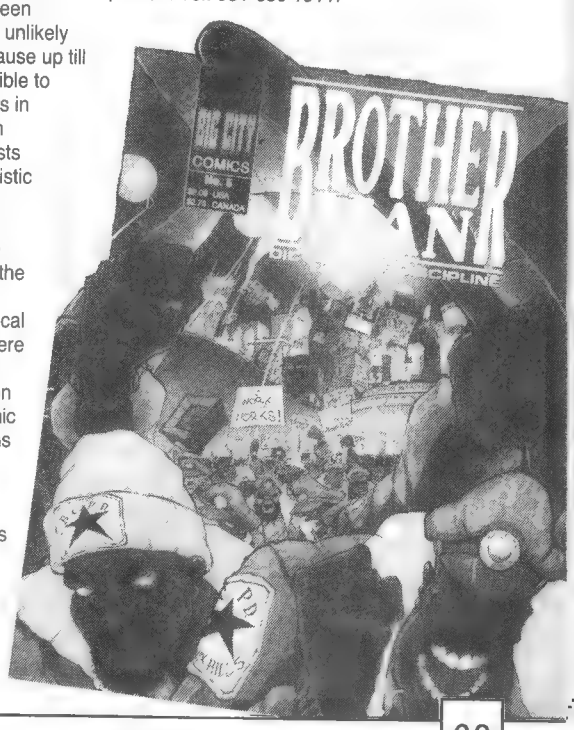
IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THE 'RABBIT BOY' CARTOON STRIP WAS AXED AND RABBIT BOY HAD SUNK INTO THE MIDST'S OF DEPRESSION AND OUT OF THE PUBLIC MIND...
RING RING
RING RING
OH SHIT!
HELLO
HI RABBIT BOY? IT'S NICK
LOOK HOW ABOUT IF WE CHANGE YOUR NAME? HOW ABOUT "HARRY HARE"?
HARRY HARE!
HARE'S ARE RARE THEY HAVE CHARISMA!
AND I DON'T?

the slime of society!" An investigator for the District Attorney by day, he fights crime and injustice at night. Witty, amusing, powerfully drawn, *Brotherman* handles subjects such as poverty, inner city tensions and whether comics are for adults in a way that doesn't force issues down your throat – it simply makes them part of the story.

Up till now it has been unavailable in this country, as major distributors are refusing to stock it (which is disgusting, as it shines when put alongside some of the sex and violence rubbish that seems to get limitless distribution!). Now however, thanks to those good folks at Gosh! Comics you can get hold of issues 1 through 9 and they promise they will keep whatever issues they can in stock. This one you must check out – it's the cutting edge of black cartooning in American.

Steve Cook

Comics for review provided by Gosh Comics, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Tel: 081-636 1011.



COMIC classifieds

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ABBREVIATIONS

THIS IS A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS YOU MAY FIND IN THE CLASSIFIEDS & LISTING SECTIONS

M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
R.S.	Rolled Spine
M.C.	Marked Cover
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P.S.	Price Stamp

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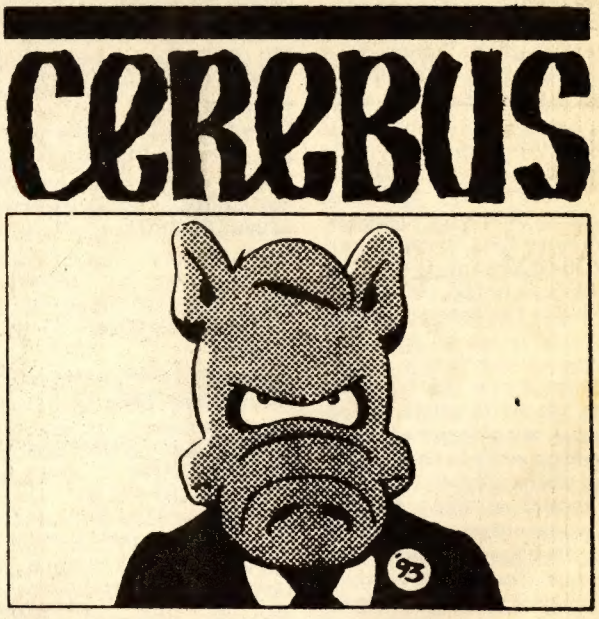

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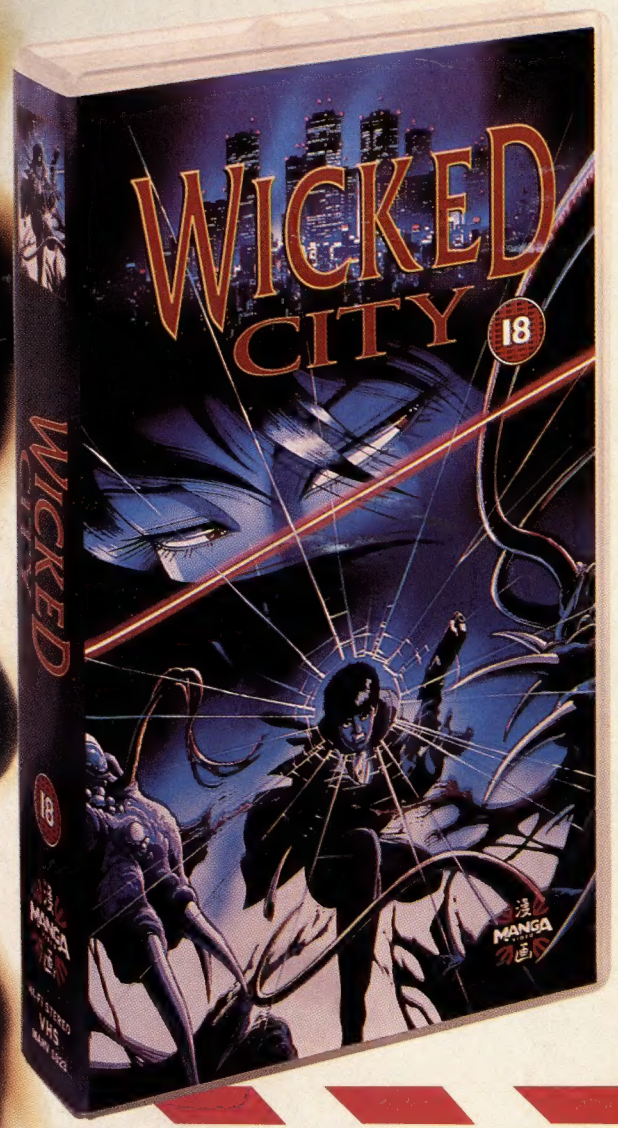

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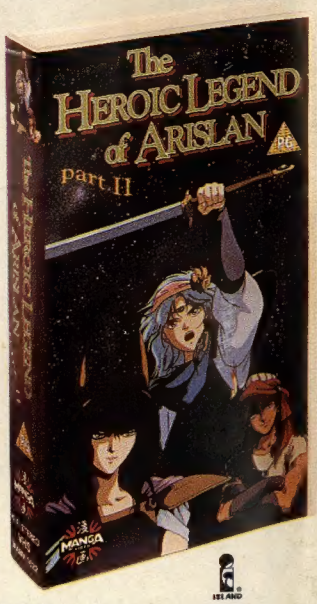

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